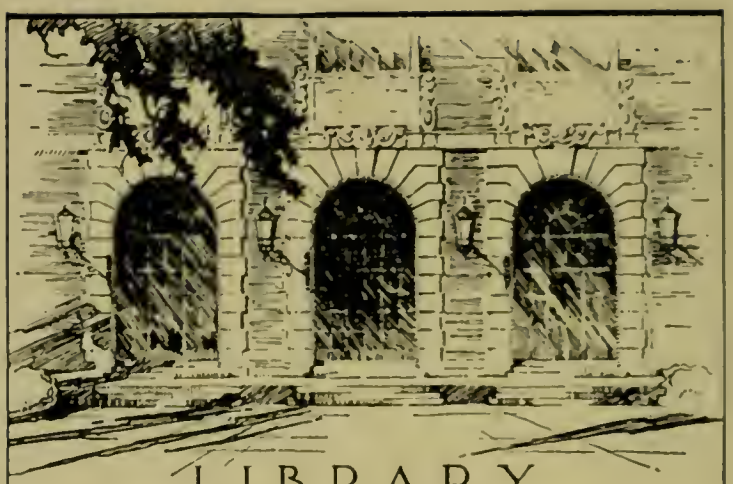

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THE

WOLFE OF BADENOCH.

EDINBURGH:

PRINTED BY JAMES BALLANTYNE AND CO.

THE

WOLFE OF BADENOCH;

A HISTORICAL ROMANCE OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LOCHANDHU."

De cornada de ansaron
Guarde Dios mi corazon.
Spanish Proverb.

VOL. II.

EDINBURGH:
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1827.

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ERRATA ET CORRIGENDA.

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—— 34, line 2 from the bottom, *for* butt-horses *read* batt-horses.
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—— 60, line 2, *for* coarct *read* coart.
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THE

WOLFE OF BADENOCH.

CHAPTER I.

Hepborne and his page proceeded slowly down the margin of the lake, preceded by their new guide; and as they looked back, they saw the bright plaids of Duncan and Donald MacErchar winding up among the rocks, and appearing on the face of the precipitous mountain like two tiny red lady-bird beetles on a wall. The way towards the lower end of the lake was rough and tiresome; but in due time they reached the place where the party had spent the night, and where they found Mortimer Sang looking anxiously out for their arrival. He had almost resolved to go himself in quest of the Knight, for he had strongly suspected treachery, as his guide had more than once manifested symptoms of an intention to

escape from them during the previous night's march, and had been only prevented by the unremitting watch kept upon him by the squire, and two or three of his most active and determined people, to whom he had given particular instructions. This circumstance, coupled with the subsequent discovery of the villain having gone off in the night, the moment he had found an opportunity of doing so, had made Sang so apprehensive of something treacherous, that nothing would have kept him with the party so long, had it not been for the remembrance of his master's strict orders, to permit no consideration whatever to detach him from them.

Poor Maurice de Grey was considerably fatigued, and required to be indulged with a little rest ere they could set out. At length the whole party mounted and got in motion, and taking their way slowly down the glen, under their new and intelligent guide, soon found themselves buried in the endless pine forests. Game, both four-footed and winged, of every description, crossed their path in all directions. Red-deer, and roe-deer, and herds of bisons, were frequently seen by them; now and then the echoes were awakened by the howling of a rout of gaunt and hungry wolves, sweeping across the glen in pursuit of their prey; and

often the trampling of their horses' feet disturbed the capercailzie, as he sat feeding on the tops of the highest firs, while their palfreys were alarmed in their turn at the powerful flap of his sounding wings, as they bore him rapidly away.

Leaving the deeper forests for a time, they climbed the mountain sides, and crossing some high ridges, and elevated valleys, where the wood was thin and scattered, they again descended, and began to penetrate new wildernesses of thick-set and tall-grown pine timber; until, after a very long march, they arrived on the banks of the rapid Spey, where they rested for a time, to refresh themselves and their horses. There Angus procured a guide of the country for them, on whose fidelity he could depend, and having received a handsome remuneration from Sir Patrick, returned the way he came.

They now crossed the river by a broad ford, and began winding through the forests that stretched from its northern banks, and continued gradually rising over its pine-covered hills. The day was approaching its close as they were winding along the side of a steep hill, that rose over the head of a deep but narrow glen, surrounded by fantastic rocks shooting here and

there from amongst the oak woods that fringed its sides. Sir Patrick's attention was attracted by the sight of some white tents that were pitched on a small level area of smooth turf in the bottom, where it was divided by the meanders of a clear rill

"She be the WOLFE OF BADENOCH yonder," said his guide, pointing downwards with a face of alarm.

"The Wolfe of Badenoch!" cried Sir Patrick eagerly; "what, are these the tents of the Earl of Buchan?" for he knew that the King's son, Alexander Stewart, Earl of Buchan and Lord of Badenoch, whom he was about to visit, had obtained that *nom-de-guerre* from his ferocity.

"Ay, ay," said the guide, "she's right; tat's the Earl of Buchan—tat's the Wolfe of Badenoch. Troth she's at the hunts there. Uve, uve!"

"Then, mine honest fellow," said Hepborne, "if those be indeed the tents of the Earl of Buchan, thy trouble with us shall be soon ended. Do but lead me down thither, and thou shalt be forthwith dismissed, with thy promised warison."

The guide paused and hesitated for a time, his countenance betraying considerable uneasi-

ness and apprehension; but at length he began slowly to retrace his steps along the side of the hill, and turning off into a path that led down through the wood over a gentle declivity, he finally brought them out into the bottom of the glen, about a quarter of a mile below the spot where they had seen the tents. As they issued from the covert of the trees into the narrow glade, the winding of a bugle-mot came up the glen, and Sir Patrick halted for a few moments, to listen if it would be repeated. By and by, the neighing of steeds, and a loud laughing and merry talking, announced the approach of a crowd of people, who very soon appeared, filing round the turning of a rock.

"Mercy be about her! yon's ta Wolfe now," cried the guide, in the utmost trepidation; and, without waiting for reward or anything else, darted into the adjoining thicket, and disappeared.

At the head of the numerous party that advanced came a knight, mounted on a large and powerful black horse. And well was it indeed for the steed that he was large and powerful, for his rider was as near seven as six feet in height, while his body and limbs displayed so great a weight of bone and muscle, that any less potent palfrey must have bent beneath it.

But the noble animal came proudly on with him, capering as if he felt not the weight of his rider. The knight wore a broad bonnet, graced with the royal hern's plume, and a hunting-dress of gold-embroidered green cloth, over which hung a richly-ornamented bugle, while his baldrick, girdle-stead, hunting-pouch, anelace, and dirk, were all of the most gorgeous and glittering materials. His boots were of tawny buckskin, and his heels armed with large spurs of the most massive gold. The furniture of his horse was equally superb, the bits in particular being heavily embossed, and the whole thickly covered over with studs and bosses of the same precious metal. His saddle and housings were of rich purple velvet, wrought with golden threads, and the stirrups of solid silver.

But, accustomed as Sir Patrick Hepborne had been to all the proud pomp and splendid glitter of chivalry, he minded not these trifling matters beyond the mere observance of them. It was the head and face of the person who approached that most particularly rivetted his attention. Both were on a great scale, and of an oval form. The forehead was high and retreating, and wore on it an air of princely haughtiness; the nose was long and hooked;

the lips were large, but finely formed; and the mouth, though more than usually extended, was well shaped, and contained a set of well-arranged teeth, of uncommon size and unsullied lustre. The complexion was florid, and the hair, beard, whiskers, and moustaches, all ample and curling freely, were of a jet black, that was but slightly broken in upon by the white hairs indicating the approaching winter of life. But the most characteristic features were the eyes, which would have been shaded by the enormous eyebrows that threw their arches over them, had it not been for their extreme prominence. They were fiery and restless, and although their expression was sometimes hilarious, yet they generally wore the lofty look of pride; but it was easy to discern that they were in the habit of being perpetually moved by an irritable and impatient temper, that was no sooner excited than their orbs immediately assumed a fearful inclination inwards, that almost amounted to a squint.

This knight, whom Sir Patrick immediately recognized, by the description he had often heard of him, to be Alexander Stewart, Earl of Buchan, the Wolfe of Badenoch, was about the age of fifty, or perhaps a few years younger. By his side rode a lady, clad in a scarlet man-

tle, profusely embroidered with gold, and seated on a piebald palfrey, covered with trappings even more costly than those of the horse that carried the Wolfe of Badenoch himself. She seemed to be approaching the age of forty, and was slightly inclining to embonpoint, fresh in face and complexion, and very beautiful. Behind them rode five gay and gallant young knights, the eldest of whom might have been about twenty. They were all richly apparelled, and accoutred in a taste somewhat similar to that of the elder knight, who rode before them, and were mounted on magnificent horses, that came neighing and prancing along, their impatience of restraint adding to the pleasure of their youthful riders, especially of the younger boys.

A large train of attendants followed, partly on horseback and partly on foot. These were variously armed with hunting-spears, cross-bows, and long bows; and many of the pedestrians, who were coarsely clad, and some of them even barefooted as well as bareheaded, led a number of alloundes, raches, and sleuth-hounds, whilst others carried carcases of red-deer and roebucks, suspended on poles borne between two, as also various fourfooted and

feathered animals of chase, which had fallen victims to the sport of the day.

All this, which has taken so much time to describe, was seen by Sir Patrick Hepborne at a single glance, or at least he had sufficient leisure to make himself master of the particulars ere the cavalcade came up to him. As the Wolfe of Badenoch drew near, Sir Patrick dismounted, and giving his horse to his esquire, advanced towards him, and paid him the respectful obeisance due to the King's son.

"Ha!" cried the Wolfe, reining up his curvetting steed; "who, in the fiend's name, may this be?"

"My noble Lord of Buchan," said Hepborne, "I wait upon your Highness by the especial desire of his Majesty the King, your royal father. Being on my way to Moray-land, to be present at the tournament to be held by the Earl of Moray on the Mead of St John's, I passed by Scone, to pay mine humble duty at his Grace's Court after my return from France, where I have been for some of these late years; and knowing mine intent of visiting these northern parts, your royal father did kindly bid me seek your well-known hospitality as I should pass into Moray-land. Moreover, he did honour me so far, as to charge me with

a letter under his own signet, addressed for your Highness.—My name is Sir Patrick Hepborne."

The Wolfe fidgetted to and fro upon his horse, and displayed very great impatience until the knight had finished.

"Ha!" said he, the moment he had done speaking—"ha! 'tis well. By my trusty burly-brand, thou art welcome, Sir Patrick Hepborne. Thy name hath a sweet savour with it for stark doughtiness in stiff stour, since thou be'st, as I ween, the son of the bold Sir Patrick Hepborne of Hailes. By my beard, thou art welcome," said he again, as he stretched out his hand to him. "As for the old man's letter, we shall see that anon when better place and leisure serve. Know this lady, Sir Patrick," continued he, turning towards her who rode with him; "she is the Lady Mariota Athyn, (of whom peraunter thou mayest have heard,) and mother to those five sturdy whelps who ride at my back, and who are wont to call me father. But get thee to horse, Sir Patrick; the feast waits for us ere this, and we can talk anon with our wine wassail. If thou hast done as much to-day as we have, and been as long from thy trencher, the red fiend catch me but thou wilt think more of eating than of talking.

Get thee to horse, then, and on with us, I say; we are now but a short space from the tents. To horse, then, to horse!"

Mortimer Sang brought up his master's steed, Sir Patrick vaulted into the saddle, and being beckoned by the Wolfe to take his place beside him, immediately obeyed. The Lady Mariota Athyn, who had eyed the handsome Maurice de Grey, gave him a condescending signal to come to her right hand, and in this order they rode up the glen, towards the place where the tents were pitched, the knight's party mingling as they went with that of Lord Badenoch, according to the various conditions of the persons who composed it.

CHAPTER II.

The spot chosen for the Wolfe of Badenoch's hunting encampment was beautiful. The little rill came welling forth in one great jet, like a copious fountain, from a crevice in the rock, that, rising like a mimic castle, terminated the glen at this its upper extremity. The bright greens of the ivy, honeysuckle, and various creeping plants and shrubs that climbed over its surface, blended with the rich orange, brown, and yellow tints of the lichens that covered it. On the smooth flat sward, a little in advance of this, was pitched the pavilion of the Wolfe himself, with his banner waving before it. It consisted of three apartments, the largest of which, occupying the whole front, was used as the banqueting-place, whilst the two others behind were devoted to the private convenience and repose of the Earl and the Lady Mariota.

To the right and left of this central pavilion were the tents of the five young knights. Of these the eldest, Sir Alexander Stewart, after-

wards Earl of Marr, had all the violence of his father's temper; Sir Andrew, the second, was cool, crafty, and designing; and Walter, James, and Duncan, who were too young to have anything like fixed characters, had all the tricks and pranks of ill-brought-up and unrestrained youths, though Duncan, the youngest, had naturally rather a more amiable disposition than any of the others.

Besides these tents, there were several more on the two flanks, extending towards the extremity of the horns of the semicircle, occupied by squires and the principal people of the Earl's retinue. Within a rocky recess at one side, almost shut out from view by the embowering trees, a number of temporary huts were erected for culinary purposes, as well as for lodging the great mass of the lower order of attendants; and on the opposite side were extensive pickets, to which the horses were attached in lines.

The night dropped fast down on that low and narrow spot, and, as the cavalcade arrived, the people were already engaged in lighting a huge bonfire in the centre of it, quite capable of restoring an artificial day, and this immense blaze was to be kept up all night, partly for purposes of illumination, and partly to keep off the wolves. The Earl no sooner appeared, than all

was clamour, and running, and bustle, and confusion. He halted in front of the tents—the bugles blew, and the squires and attendants ran to hold his stirrup. But he waited not for their assistance. Ere they could reach him he sprang to the ground, and lifting the Lady Mariota from off her palfrey, carried her into the pavilion.

"Sir Patrick," said he to Hepborne, as an esquire ushered him in, "thou must bear with such rustic entertainment as we have to offer thee here to-night. To-morrow we move to Lochyndorbe, where thou shalt be better bestowed."

Sir Patrick bowed; but he saw no lack of provision for good cheer as he cast his eyes over the ample board, which was covered with a profusion of silver utensils of all kinds, among which were strangely mingled pewter, and even wooden trenchers, and where there were not only silver flagons and mazers, but leathern black-jacks, wooden stoups, and numerous drinking-horns, the whole being lighted by a silver lamp that hung over the centre.

"What, in the fiend's name, makes the feast to tarry?" cried the Wolfe impatiently: "do the loons opine that we have no stomachs, or that we are blocks of wood, that we can stand

all day i' the passes, and yet do at night without feeding?—The feast, I say—the feast!—Nay, send me that rascal cook here."

The cook, sweating from his fiery occupation, was instantly brought before him, trembling, carrying a stew-pan in one hand, and a long iron gravy-ladle in the other, with his sleeves tucked up, and clothed in a white apron and night-cap.

"Villain!" said the Wolfe, in a tremendous voice, "why are not the viands on the table? By all the fiends of the infernal realms, thou shalt be forthwith spitted and roasted before thine own fire, an we have not our meal ere I can turn myself."

The cook bowed in abject terror, and, as soon as he was beyond the door, ran off bawling to his assistants; and in a few minutes, a crowd of lackeys bearing the smoking-hot dishes came pouring into the pavilion, heaping the board with them till it groaned again.

"Blow the bugle for the banquet," cried the impatient Earl, seating himself at the head of the table. "Sit thee down, Mariota, on my right hand here; and do thou, Sir Patrick Hepborne, sit here on my left. The boys, and the rest, may find places for themselves."

"But where is thy gentle page, Sir Knight?"

said the Lady Mariota to Hepborne. "I pray thee let him sit down with us. Certes, he doth appear to be come of no mean blood. Make me to know how the doced youth is hight, I do beseech thee?"

"Lady," said Sir Patrick, smiling, "he is called Maurice de Grey, a truant boy of a good English house. His father is a gallant knight, who governs the Border strength of Werk. Tired of soft service as a page of dames, he left his indulgent mother to roam into the world, and chancing to encounter me, I adopted him as my page. In truth, though young, he is prudent, and perdie, he hath more than once showed a good mettle, and some spirit too, though his thewes and muscles have hardly strength enow, as yet, to bear it out."

"Oh, fye on thee, Maurice de Grey," said the lady, smiling graciously on the page, as he entered among the crowd—"fye on thee, Maurice, I say. Art thou so naughty as to wish to shun the converse of women at thine age? Oh, shame to thy youth-hed. Parfoy, I shall myself undertake thy punishment, so sit thee down by me here, that I may school thee for thy folly and want of gallantry."

Maurice bowed respectfully, and immediately occupied the proffered seat, where the lady

did all in her power to gratify him, by putting the nicest dainties on his plate, and prattling many a kind and flattering speech in his ear. Sir Alexander Stewart placed himself next to Sir Patrick, and though naturally fierce and haughty in his air, showed every disposition to exert hospitable and knightly courtesy towards his father's guest. Below them, on both sides of the table, sat his brothers; and the rest of the long board was filled up by the esquires and other retainers, who each individually occupied the first room he could find. For some time there was but little conversation, and nothing interrupted the clinking of knives upon the trenchers, but an occasional pledge called for by the Wolfe, who, as he eat largely and voraciously, drank long draughts too, to promote the easy descent of the food into his capacious stomach. He continued to eat long after every one else at table had ceased.

"Ha!" said he at length, as he laid down his implements of carving; "quick! clear away those offensive fragments. Hey! what stand ye all staring at? Remove the assiettes and trenchers, I say—Are ye deaf, knaves?"

Every servile hand was upon the board in an instant, and the dishes and plates disappeared as if by magic.

"Wine!—Rhenish!—Malvoisie!—Wine, I say!" vociferated the Wolfe. "What, ye rogues, are we to perish for thirst?"

The silver flagons, stoups, and black-jacks, were replenished with equal celerity, and deep draughts went round, and the carouse became every moment more fierce and frequent. The Lady Mariota Athyn rose to retire to her own private quarter of the pavilion.

"Young Sir Page," said she to Maurice de Grey, "wine wassail is not for thee, I ween; thou shalt along with my boys and me, thou naughty youth; thou shalt with me, I say. Verily I condemn thee to do penance with me and my damsels until the hour of couchee. Come along, Sir Good-for-nothing."

The page arose, and went with the lady and her three younger sons, but he seemed to go very unwillingly. In truth, he had received her little attentions rather coldly; so much so, indeed, that Hepborne had felt somewhat hurt at his seeming indifference.

After much wine had been swallowed, and a great deal of conversation had passed about hunting, and deeds of chivalry,—

"And so thou goest to this tournay of my brother-in-law the Earl of Moray's, Sir Patrick?" said the Wolfe.

"Such is the object of my journey, my lord," replied Hepborne.

"By St Hubert! I have a mind to go with thee, were it only to show my boys the sport," replied the Wolfe. "But, by the thunder of Heaven! I am not over well pleased with this same brother-in-law. The old man, my doting liege-father, hath refused to add Moray-land to my lieutenantship, which now lacketh but it to give me broad control from the Spey to the Orcades; and, by my beard, I cannot choose but guess that Earl John hath had some secret hand in preventing him. My sister Margery denies this stoutly; but she would deny anything to keep fire and sword from her lord's lands. Yet may the hot fiend swallow me, if I ween not that I have hit the true mark in so suspecting."

"By the red Rood, then, I would straightway tax him with it," said Sir Alexander Stewart.

"Nay, nay, meddle thou not, Sandy," said the Wolfe. "I lack not thine advice. This matter concerns not thee."

"Concerns not me!" exclaimed Sir Alexander hotly—"by the martyrdom of St Andrew, but it does though—it concerneth me mightily; yea, it enchafeth me to see thee, my father, pusillanimously suffer thyself to be agrutched and hameled in the extent of thy flight, an if thou

wert a coistrll hawk, to be mewed by any he of the mark of Adam."

"I tell thee, boy, thou art a silly fool," roared out the Wolfe, gnashing his teeth in a fury.

"If I am a fool, then," said Sir Alexander, in no less a rage, "I am at least wise enough to know from whom I have had my folly."

The ferocious Wolfe could stand this no longer. His eyes flashed fire, and catching up a large silver flagon of wine, from which he had been going to drink, he hurled it at his son's head, with so much celerity and truth of aim, that had not Hepborne raised his left arm, and intercepted it in its flight, though at the expense of a severe contusion, the hot Sir Alexander would never have uttered a word more. Heedless of the escape he had made, he rose to return the compliment against his father; but Hepborne, and some of those nearest to him, interfered, and with some difficulty the anger of both father and son was appeased. It was a feature in the Wolfe's character, and one also in which his son Alexander probably participated, that although his passion was easily and tremendously excited on every trifling occasion. so as to convert him at once into an ungovernable wild beast, capable of the most savage and cruel deeds, yet there were times when he was

not unapt to repent him of any atrocious act he might have been guilty of, particularly where his own family were concerned. He loved his son Alexander—with the exception of the child Duncan, indeed, he loved him more than any of the others, perhaps because he more nearly resembled himself in temper. After the fray had been put an end to, he sat for some moments trembling with agitation; but as his wrath subsided, and he became calmer, he began to picture to himself his son stretched dead at his feet by a blow from his own hand. His countenance became gloomy and oppressed; he fidgetted upon his seat, and at length starting hurriedly up—

"Depardieux, I thank thee, Sir Patrick," said he, taking Hepborne's right hand, and squeezing it heartily—"depardieux, I thank thee for having arrested a blow I should have so much repented. Alexander," continued he, going up and embracing his son, "forgive me, my boy; but provoke not mine ire in the same way again, I beseech thee."

"Nay, father," said Sir Alexander, "perhaps I went too far; but, by the mass, I was irritated by the thought that John Dunbar, Earl of Moray, should have got between thee and the King with his silky curreidew tongue."

"Right, boy," cried the Wolfe, relieved by finding a new outlet for his rage. and striking the table furiously with his fist as he resumed his seat—"right, boy: there it is. If I but find that my suspicions are true, by the beard of my grandfather, his being my sister Margery's husband shall not save him from my wrekery. But, Sir Patrick," continued he, after a short pause, "so please thee, let me see the old man's letter thou wert charged with. Knowest thou ought of its contents?"

"No, my good lord," said Hepborne, taking the embroidered silken case that contained the King's epistle from his bosom. "His Majesty put it himself into my hands as I kissed his, to take my duteous leave, and here it is as he gave it to me."

The Wolfe glanced at the royal signet, and then, with his wonted impatience, tore up the silk, and began to read it to himself. His brow darkened as he went on—his teeth ground against each other—and his lip curled with a growing tempest. At length he dashed down the King's letter on the table, and struck the board with his clenched fist two or three times successively—

"Ha! see, Sir Knight, what it is thou hast brought me," cried he, in a fury so great that

he could hardly give utterance to his words. "Read that, read that, I say. By all the fiends, 'tis well I read it not at first, ere I knew thee better, Sir Knight, or thou mightest have had but a strange reception. Read it—read it, I say!"

Hepborne took up the letter, and read as follows:

"To the High and Noble, our trusty and well-beloved son, Alexander Stewart, Earl of Buchan, Earl of Ross, Lord of Badenoch, and our faithful Lieutenant over the northern part of our kingdom, from the bounds of the county of Moray to the Pentland Firth, these greeting—

"Son Alexander,—We do hope these may find thee well.—It hath reached our ears, that thou dost still continue to keep abiding with thee thy leman, Mariota Athyn. Though she, the said Mariota, be the mother of thy five boys, yet is the noble Lady Euphame, Countess of Ross, thy true and lawful wife; with her, therefore, it behoveth thee to consort, yea, and her it behoveth thee to cherish: yet are we informed, and it doleth us much that it should be so, that thou dost still leave her to grieve in loneliness and solitude. Bethink thee that thou

yet liest under the threatened ban of holy mother Church, and under the penalty laid on thee by the holy Bishops of Moray and Ross, for having cruelly used her, and that thou dost yet underly, and art bound by their sentence, to live with her in a virtuous and godly manner. Let not gratitude permit thee to forget, also, that she did bestow upon thee rich heritages in land, and that it is through her thou dost hold thy title of Earl of Ross, which we did graciously confirm to thee. Return, then, from thy wicked ways, and cleave unto thy lawful wife, to her cherisaunce, as thou would'st value our good favour, and as thou would'st give jovisaunce to these our few remaining years of eld. And so, as thou dost obey these our injunctions, may God keep thee and thine in health, and soften thine heart to mercy and godliness. So prayeth thy loving father and King,

"ROBERT REX."

Hepborne laid down the King's letter without venturing a single comment on it, and it was instantly snatched up by Sir Alexander Stewart.

"What!" cried he with indignation, after glancing it over, "is our mother, or are we, to

be turned adrift from our father's house, like ragamuffin quistrons, to beg our way through the world, to please a doting old man?"

"Nay, sooner shall I pluck out every hair of this beard from my face," shouted the Wolfe in a fury, and tugging out a handful of it unconsciously as he said so. "What! am I to be schooled by an old bigoted prater at my time of life, and to be condemned to live with a restless intriguing hag, who hath been the cause of so much vexation to me? The red fiend shall catch me then! Not for all the bishops in Mother Church, with the Orders four to boot, shall I submit me to such penance. But, by all the powers of darkness, the split-capped Bishop of Moray, Alexander Barr, shall suffer for this. He it is who hath been at the bottom of it all; he it is who hath stirred up the King; and by the infernal fires, he shall ere long undergo my wrekery. He hath been an eternal torture to me; but by my trusty burlybrand, I shall make the craven, horrow lossel rue that ever he roused the *Wolfe of Badenoch.*"

He struck the table tremendously with his fist as he concluded. His calling himself by his *nom-de-guerre*, was with him like Jupiter swearing by the river Styx. His people moved

on their seats, put on stern brows, and looked at one another, as if each would have said, "Brother, we shall have something to do here." The Earl himself snatched up a flagon of Rhenish and took a deep draught to cool his ire; then turning to Hepborne,—

"I bid thee good night, Sir Patrick," said he; "thou hast no fault in this matter; good night, I say." Then turning to the rest—"See that Sir Patrick Hepborne have the best quarters that may be given him. Good night. By all the fiends, the white-faced hypocrite shall pay for it." And so saying he disappeared into the inner apartment of the pavilion.

Immediately afterwards, the page and the three younger Stewarts came forth. Sir Alexander still continued to fret and broil with the fury which the king's letter had excited in him; yet he neglected not the civilities due to their guest. He gave orders that the youngest boy's tent should be prepared for Sir Patrick Hepborne, and that his brothers, Duncan and James, should occupy one tent for the night; and leaving Sir Andrew Stewart to see that the stranger knight was properly accommodated, he made an exit similar to his father's.

"'Tis an unfortunate weakness," said Sir Andrew Stewart, as he accompanied Hepborne

to his tent, " 'tis an unhappy weakness that so cruelly besets my father and my brother Alexander; half the hours of their lives are spent in temporary frenzy. It would be well for them if they could bridle their passions."

Hepborne found it difficult to reply; so changing the subject adroitly, and thanking Sir Andrew for his courteous attention, he bade him good night, and was glad to take refuge in the quiet of the tent that had been prepared for him. Being indisposed for sleep, he called his page, whose couch was in the outer apartment, and ere they retired to rest, their conversation ran as follows.

" Maurice," said the knight, " why didst thou show thyself so backward in receiving the Lady Mariota's favours? She seemed anxious to show thee all manner of kind attention, yet thou didst repel her by thy very looks."

" Sir Knight," said the page, " I like not that woman; she is not the wife of the Earl of Buchan, and meseems it a foul thing to see her sit in the seat of so honourable and virtuous a lady as the Countess of Ross, queening it where she hath no claim but the base one that may spring from her own infamy."

" Thou art right, boy," said Hepborne, " thou art right, in good truth; but 'tis not for us to

read moral lessons to our seniors. Where we see positive harm, or glaring injury, done to any one by another, then it behoveth a true knight to stay not his hand, but forthwith to redress the grievance at peril of his life. But though he is not to court the society of those who sin grossly, yet it falleth not within the province of a knight to read moral lectures and homilies to every one he meeteth that may offend against God's laws; else might he exchange the helmet for the cowl. And, verily, he should have little else to do but to preach, since the wickedness of man is so great, and so universal, that there is no one who might not call for his sermons; yea, and while zealously preaching to others, he would certainly fall into guilt himself. No, Maurice; let us take care to live irreproachably; then let us suffer no one to do tyranny or injustice to another; and having secured these important things, let us leave all else to a righteous God, who will himself avenge the sins committed against his moral law. Yet do I much commend that virtuous indignation in thee; and if thy love should ever haply run smooth, as I sincerely pray that it may, I trust that thou wilt be a mirror of virtuous constancy."

The page clasped his hands on his breast,

and throwing up his eyes to Heaven, "Grant but that my love may yet prosper," said he, fervently; "grant but that, ye blessed Virgin, and the sun shall not be more constant to the firmament, than I shall be in attachment to the object of my affection! But couldest thou be constant, Sir Knight?" added he, with a sigh.

"'Tis an odd question, boy," said Hepborne, laughing. "I think I know so much of myself as to say boldly, that I could; and, verily, I would never mate me where I weened there might be risk of temptation to aught else. But, of a truth, I have not yet seen the woman of whom I might think so highly as to risk chaining my virtue to her side."

The page sat silent for some moments, and at length, turning to Hepborne, "I have seen knights," said he, "who did roune sweet speeches in the ears of foolish maidens, who did swear potent oaths that they did love them, and yet, when the silly pusels believed them, they would laugh at their facile credence, and then leaping into their saddles, ride away, making mirth of the sad wounds they had caused —Say, Sir Knight, could'st thou do this?"

"Depardieux, mon belami Maurice de Grey," said the knight, laughing, "methinks thou hast

made thyself my father confessor to-night. What meanest thou by these questions?"

"In truth, my dear master," said the boy, "I do but ask, that I may better myself by the wisdom of thine answers. How should I, an untaught youth, ever become an honour to knighthood, as I hope one day to be, save by thy sage precept and bright example."

"Nay, then, sweet page," said the knight, kindly, "I shall not deny to answer thee. In good sooth, I have never yet been so base, nor could I ever be guilty of so much wickedness."

The page's eyes brightened for a moment at the knight's virtuous assertion.

"There be women indeed," continued Sir Patrick, "to whom it is even dangerous for a courteous knight to address the common parlance of courtly compliment, without instilling into them the vain belief that their charms have wrought a conquest. Of such an innocent fault the folly of many maidens may have made me guilty. Never, save once, did I seriously love, and then, alas, I discovered that my heart had been affected by an unworthy object, so that I did forthwith tear myself away from her."

"Unworthy, didst thou say, Sir Knight?" cried the boy earnestly; "and who, I pray thee, could be so unworthy to thee?"

"Nay, my good Maurice," said Hepborne, "that were truly to ask too much. Were she as worthy as I did once esteem her, I would proudly publish her name to the world; but after having said so much to her dishonour, and now that she cannot be mine, her name shall never more escape these lips, whilst I think of her as I at present do, save when 'tis brought in accidentally by others, or when 'tis murmured in my secret despair.—But what ails thee, boy? Thou weepest. Tell me, I pray thee, why thou should'st now be thus drent in dreriment? What hast thou to do with my love-griefs?"

"I but cry for pity, Sir Knight," said the boy. "Thy tale too doth somewhat touch mine own, and so doth it, peraunter, affect me the more. May Heaven in its mercy clear away those cruel clouds, that do at present so darken our souls!"

"Amen!" said the knight, fervently. "Then get thee to thy couch, Maurice, for I will to mine."

Sir Patrick Hepborne had already slept for a considerable time, when he was awakened by the clamour of voices. This, perhaps, would have excited little astonishment, had he not previously remarked the uncommon degree of quietness that had been preserved in the little

encampment, the probable effect of the stern character and alert discipline of him who was at the head of it. He sat up, and leaning for some moments on his elbow to listen, he by and by heard the trampling of steeds, and the bustle of preparation, as if for a departure. He then called to the page, who answered him so immediately, that Hepborne suspected, what was really the case, that he had not as yet slept.

"What noise is that we hear, Maurice?" said he.

"Methinks," said the page, "it is some party that sets forth. Perhaps it may be one moiety of the retinue who go before, to prepare those of the Castle for the Earl's coming."

This very natural explanation satisfied Hepborne. He soon heard the noise increase, and the neighing and prancing of the horses, with the voices of many men, though their words were not intelligible; then he heard a loud command to march, and the gallop of the troop died away upon his ear, and then again all was quiet, and his repose was uninterrupted until morning.

He was hardly dressed when Sir Andrew Stewart came courteously to offer the usual morning compliments, and to conduct him to the great pavilion.

"My father," said he, "hath been called on urgent business into Badenoch; he left this yesternight, to ride thither sans delay: my brothers, Alexander, Walter, and James, also went with him; but he left me here to do thee what poor hospitality I may until his return. To-day, with thy good leave, we shall hie us to Lochyndorbe, and to-morrow I hope he will be there to do the honours of the Castle in his own person."

This sudden departure of the Wolfe of Badenoch, accounted to Hepborne for the disturbance he had met with in the night. The Lady Mariota received him graciously.

"But where is my handsome good-for-nothing page?" eagerly inquired she. "Ah, there comes the naughty boy, I see.—Come hither, Sir Scapegrace; I trow I did school thee to some purpose, yestreen; but parfoy, thou shalt have more on't anon.—Come hither, I say.—Verily, the young varlet hangeth his ears like a whelp that feareth the rod; but i'faith I am not come to that yet,—though, never trust me," added she laughing, "but thou shalt have it ere long, an thou be'st not more docile.—Sit thee down here, I say. And see now how, in hopes of thine amendment, I have carved for thee the tenderest and whitest part of this black grouse's

breast; yea, Sir Good-for-nothing—with mine own fair fingers have I done it."

Maurice de Grey appeared more than half inclined to keep aloof from the lady, notwithstanding all her kind raillery; but he caught his master's eye, and seeing that Sir Patrick seemed to wish that he should receive her notice with a good grace, he put on the semblance of cheerfulness, and took his seat by her accordingly.

The morning's meal passed over without anything remarkable, the lady devoting all her attention and all her trifling to Maurice de Grey, and Hepborne being engaged in conversation with Sir Andrew Stewart; there being no one else present but the boy Duncan. Soon afterwards orders were issued for the encampment to break up, and the attendants to prepare themselves and the steeds for their departure. Much time was lost until all the necessary arrangements were made. The sturdy sullen loons were aware of the absence of the Wolfe, and revelled in the enjoyment of the power, so seldom theirs, of doing things leisurely. Besides, all the most active and intelligent persons of the suite were gone. At length a string of little butt horses, pressed from the neighbouring churls, were dispatched with the most valu-

able, and more immediately necessary part of the moveables, and a few more were left to bring up the tents and heavier articles, when additional aid should arrive.

Meanwhile, the palfrey of the Lady Mariota was brought out, together with two others for her maids; and the horses of the rest of the party also appeared. Hepborne assisted the lady to mount, but though she thanked him graciously for his courtesy, she was by no means satisfied.

"That white palfrey of thine, Sir Page Maurice," said she, "seemeth to have an affection for my pyeball; let them not be separated, I pr'ythee. Mount thee, and be thou the squire of my body for this day. Allons."

Maurice was obliged to comply, and rode off with the lady at the head of the cavalcade, followed by her son Duncan, and attended by the two damsels, who seemed by their nods and winks to each other, to imply something extremely significant, yet understood by themselves alone. Sir Patrick Hepborne rode next, with Sir Andrew Stewart. Their train was meagre compared to that which Hepborne had seen the previous evening; indeed his own attendants formed by far the greater part of the cortége that now accompanied them. Their route was by the same path that Hepborne had

approached the glen, until they reached the steep side of the hill overhanging the head of it, whence he had first peeped into it. They then continued onwards through the forest, in the same northern direction in which the guide was conducting the knight, at the time he was diverted from his way by discovering the Wolfe's hunting camp.

They travelled through a great and elevated plain, covered by pine-trees so thickly as almost to exclude the sun, and even the hills that bounded it were wooded to their very tops. At length they turned towards an opening that appeared in the hills to their left, and, winding over some knolls, began to catch occasional glimpses of an extensive sheet of water, when the dark green fir-tufts, now and then receding from one another, permitted the party to look beyond them. In a short time they reached the shore of the eastern end of Lochyndorbe, about four miles in length, and of an oblong form. The hills bounding it on the north and south arose with gentle slope. A considerable island appeared near the upper or western extremity of the lake, a short way from its southern shore, and entirely covered with the impregnable Castle, of the same name with the sheet of water surrounding it. In the vista beyond, a sloping plain appear-

ed, with high hills rising over it. The whole scene was one continued pine-forest, and as solitary and wild as the most gloomy mind could desire. A group of firs, more ancient and enormous than the rest, occupied a point of land, and were tenanted by a colony of herons; and the lonely scream of these birds, and their lagging heavy flight, added to, rather than enlivened, the sombre character of the loch.

As they made their way up the southern shore, the enormous strength of the Castle became more apparent at every step. It was, in fact, a royal fortress, constructed for the purpose of sustaining regular and determined siege. It occupied the whole island to the very margin of the water, and its outer walls running, in long unbroken lines, from one point to another, in successive stretches, embraced a space of something more than two acres within them. On a low, round projection of land, immediately opposite on the southern shore, and within about two hundred yards of it, was situated an outwork, or sconce, erected for the purpose of preserving the communication with the terra firma, but yet of too little importance to be of any great benefit to an enemy that might chance to possess himself of it, or to enable him to do much injury to the Castle, even

with the most powerful engines then in use,—particularly as the massive walls opposed to it presented a straight, continuous, unbroken, and unassailable front. Here they found several large and small boats in waiting for them; but there appeared to be a great want of people to serve them."

"Methinks thou hast but a paltry crew for thy navy to-day, Master Bruce?" said the Lady Mariota to an old grey-headed squire-seneschal, who came to receive her.

"Madame," said he, "my lord the Earl sent orders here last night for the spears, axemen, and bowmen, to meet him early this morning on Dulnan side. About an hundred good men of horse and foot marched thither long ere the sun saw the welkin, so that we be but meagrely garrisoned, else thou should'st have been received with more honour."

"Nay, then, since it is so," said the lady, "let us cross as we best may. That small boat will do for us, so lend me thine arm, Sir Page Maurice." And immediately entering the boat, she made the youth sit beside her. Hepborne and Sir Andrew Stewart also embarked, and, leaving the horses and attendants to follow at leisure, were pulled rapidly towards the Castle by a couple of old boatmen. They landed on the

narrow strip of beach, extending hardly a yard from the walls, and that only when the water was low, and were admitted through all the numerous and potent defences of the deep gateway, by the warder, and one or two men who kept watch. They then traversed the courts intervening between the outer and inner walls, which were defended at all the salient angles by immensely strong round towers, one of them completely commanding the entrance. Then passing onwards, they came to the inner gateway, through which they ascended into the central area of the Castle, forming a large elevated quadrangle, surrounded by the buildings necessary in such a garrison.

The Lady Mariota, still leaning on the arm of Maurice de Grey, led them into that part of the square occupied by the Earl's mansion, and soon introduced them into a banqueting-hall of magnificent proportions, hung round with arms, and richly furnished for the times we speak of, and where, notwithstanding the draft made that morning on the forces of the place, there was still a considerable show of domestics in waiting.

"Let us have the banquet immediately," said the Lady Mariota to the seneschal. "Sir Knight," said she, turning to Hepborne, "if

our hospitality should lack its wonted comfort to-day, thou must lay it to the account of our late absence from the Castle; and if it should want its usual spirit, it must be set down to the score of the Earl's absence. But to-morrow both these wants shall be supplied. Andrew, thou wilt see Sir Patrick Hepborne properly accommodated. As for his naughty page, Maurice de Grey, I shall myself see him properly bestowed in a chamber near mine own, that I may have all proper and convenient opportunity of repeating those lessons I have already endeavoured to impress upon him. Come along then, good-for-nothing boy; come along, I say."

The page cast an imploring look at his master, who regarded it not; then hanging his head, he followed the Lady Mariota with an unwilling step, like a laggard schoolboy who dreads the ferula of his pedagogue; whilst Hepborne was ushered to his apartment, where, having procured the attendance of the faithful Mortimer Sang, he proceeded to array himself in attire suitable to the evening.

CHAPTER III.

The evening's banquet in the Castle of Lochyndorbe passed away pretty much as the morning's meal had done in the hunting pavilion, that is to say, without anything very remarkable. The Lady Mariota, still devoting all her attention to the page, left her son, Sir Andrew Stewart, to entertain Sir Patrick Hepborne. Neither of the knights were disposed to quaff those draughts of wine which the Wolfe of Badenoch himself seemed to consider as essential to the comfort of life, and they soon separated. Hepborne sat in his apartment for some time after Mortimer Sang had left him, and then, falling into a train of reflection on the events which had occurred to him since his return from France, and perceiving that his clue of association must be fully unwound ere he could hope to sleep, he walked forth to enjoy the balmy freshness of the evening air, that he might give freer vent to his thoughts.

He got upon the rampart that looked out over the broader part of the lake, and, as he entered on one end of it, he was confounded—he could not believe his eyes—but it certainly was the figure of the Lady Eleanore de Selby that he beheld, leaning against one of the balistæ near the farther angle of the wall. The waning moon shed a dim and uncertain light; yet it was sufficient to convince him, that the figure he saw before him was the same that had made so powerful an impression on his mind at Norham. She was wrapped in a mantle, with her head bare, and her beautiful tresses flowing down in the same manner he had seen them when blown by the breezes from the Tweed; and she seemed to look listlessly out upon the wavelets, that flickered under the thin and scanty moonbeam, as they lifted themselves gently against the bulwark-stones under the wall. Apparently buried in thought, she was so perfectly without motion that he began to doubt whether it was not a phantom he beheld; nay, it was impossible she could be there in substance—she whom he had left at Norham affianced as a bride. In those days of superstition, it is no wonder, therefore, that he should have believed it was the Lady Eleanore de Selby's spirit he saw, or,

in the peculiar language of his own country, her wraith. His manly blood ran cold, and he hesitated for a moment whether he ought to advance. The figure still remained fixed. Again the thought crossed him, that it might possibly be the Lady Eleanore, and Love urged him to approach and address her; but then Prudence came, to caution him not to seem to see her, lest he might be again subdued, and forget all he had seen and heard at Norham. Thus tossed by doubt, until he could bear suspense no longer, both superstitious awe and prudence yielded to the influence of love, and, unable to restrain himself, he walked along the rampart towards the figure. It seemed not to hear his step; it moved not until he was within three or four paces, when it started at the sound of his steps, and turning suddenly towards him, displayed the countenance of—the page, Maurice de Grey.

"Ah, Sir Patrick!" said the boy, and instantly applying his taper fingers to his hair, he began twisting it up into a knot over his head, accidentally assuming, as he did so, the very attitude in which Hepborne had seen the lady when similarly employed on the rampart at Norham.

"Maurice de Grey!" exclaimed Hepborne

with extreme astonishment, "is it you I see? Verily, thine attitude, boy, did so remind me of that in which I once beheld thy cousin, the Lady Eleanore de Selby, that for a moment I did almost believe that it was really she who stood before me. I did never remark before, that thou dost wear thy hair so womanishly long."

Sir Patrick's astonishment had been too great to permit him to remark the page's trepidation when first surprised by him, and before his amazement had subsided, Maurice de Grey had time to recover himself.

"'Tis true," said he, "Sir Knight, that I have always worn my hair long, and put up in a silken net, being loath to cut it away, seeing it was the pride of my mother's heart; but, nathless, if thou dost think it unmanly in me to wear it so, verily it shall be cut off before to-morrow morning, that it may no longer offend thee. Yet I marvel much what could possibly make thee to think that my cousin, the Lady Eleanore, could be here in the Castle of Lochyndorbe; or how hast thou perchance set thine eyes on her, so as to have so perfect a remembrance of her figure as thou dost seem to preserve? I know that her father, Sir Walter, doth

take especial care that she shall never be seen by any Scottish knight. Then by what accident, I pray thee, didst thou behold her?"

Hepborne was considerably puzzled and perplexed by these naif questions from the page. To have refused to reply to them at all, would have been the very way to have excited a thousand suspicions in the boy's mind; he therefore thought it better to answer him, and he wished to do so in a calm and indifferent manner. But it was a subject on which he could not think, far less talk, with composure, and, ere he wist, he burst into an ecstacy of feeling that quite confounded the page.

"See her!" said he; "alas, too often have I seen the Lady Eleanore de Selby for my peace. Never, never shall peace revisit this bosom. She is another's; yet, nathless, must this torn heart be hers whilst it shall throb with life." And saying so, he covered his face with his hands, and retreated some steps to hide the violence of his emotions; but becoming ashamed of having thus exposed his secret to the page, and made him privy to the extent of his weakness, he returned to the boy, and found him weeping bitterly, apparently from sympathy.

"Maurice," said Hepborne, calmly address-

ing him, "accident hath made thee wring from me the secret of my love, as chance did also make me tell thee yesternight, that I had cause to fear that the demoiselle who hath so deeply affected me was not in truth altogether what she at first appeared to me. As she is thy cousin, and so dear to thee as thou dost now say she is, I would not willingly allow thee to suppose that I have been estranged from her by mere caprice. I shall therefore tell thee, that the Lady Eleanore de Selby did give me good cause to believe that my ardent protestations of love were not unpleasing to her; nay, she even held out encouragement to the prosecution of my suit; and yet, after all this ground of hope, I did discover that she was affianced to another knight, in whose arms I did actually behold her, as they parted from each other, with many tears, at the keep-bridge of Norham, on the very morning when I and my friend left the place. Her emotions were too tender to be mistaken. She it was who sported lightly with my heart, not I with hers; for had she not been faithless, I would have sacrificed life itself for her love, and would have considered the wealth of a kingdom but as dross compared with the possession of a jewel so precious. Even as it is, I am

doomed to love her for ever. I feel it—I feel it here!" said he, passionately striking his heart—"I can never, never cease to love her."

The page seemed petrified with the charge brought against his cousin. He grew faint, and staggered back a pace or two, until he was stayed by the support he received from the balista; then panting for a moment, he was at length relieved by a flood of tears.

"Thou seest, Maurice," said Hepborne, "the facts are too damning. It would have been better for thee to have inquired less curiously. But what figure is that which cometh yonder from the farther end of the rampart?"

"Blessed Virgin," cried Maurice de Grey, "'tis my perpetual torment, the Lady Mariota. What shall I do? Methought I had escaped from her importunity for this night at least."

"Why shouldest thou not be able to bear with her?" said the knight; "'tis a part of thy schooling, young man, to submit to mortification, and, above all, to bear with unpleasant society, without losing a jot of thy courtesy, especially where women are in question."

"True, Sir Knight," said the page, half whimpering, "but the Lady Mariota hath actually made violent love to me. Oh, I cannot bear the wretch."

Hepborne could not help laughing at the ludicrous distress of the youth, and he had hardly time to compose himself ere the Lady Mariota came within speaking distance of them.

"So, so, thou art there, runaway?" said she to the page, as she passed by Hepborne with a mere bow of acknowledgment to get at Maurice, who retreated towards the balista with his head down—"so thou art there, art thou, Sir Scapegrace? Thou art a pretty truant indeed," continued she, hooking him under one arm, and giving him a gentle slap on one cheek. "But, thank my lucky stars, I have caught thee now, and verily thou shalt not again escape me. I'faith thou shalt have thy wings clipt, my little tom-tit; I shall have thee tied to my apron-string, that thou hop thee not away from me thus at every turning. I did but let thee out of my sight for an instant, and whisk I find thee at the very outermost verge of my circle. Nay, had it not been for these walls and waters, in good truth thou mightest have been beyond my search ere this. Come away, Sir Good-for-nothing. Allons, make up thy mind to thy chain—let me lead thee by it, and do not thou pull so."

"Lady," said Hepborne, "thou must have some mercy on the poor youth. He hath so

lately escaped from female thrall at home, that, as yet, he can but ill brook anything that resembleth it. Leave him to me, I beseech thee. At present he joys in the newly-acquired society of men; by degrees he will come to feel how much more sweet and soothing are the delights of women's converse, and——"

"Nay, nay, Sir Knight," said the Lady Mariota, interrupting him hastily, "I shall not yield my control over the renegado, I promise thee; he shall with me this moment. Come along, Sir Page Maurice—come along, I say. Thou art a pretty youth indeed! I have searched for thee through every apartment, nay, through every creek and cranny in the Castle; and now that I have found thee, by my troth, I shall not yield thee up so easily. Come along, I say." And like a fox-bitch dragging off an unhappy kid, so did the Lady Mariota drag away the hapless Maurice de Grey, in defiance of his lagging steps, his peevish replies, his hanging head, his pouting lip, and the numerous glances of vexation he darted from under his eye-lashes at his tormentor.

Hepborne retired to his repose, half amused and half angry with the persecution inflicted on his poor page. Early next morning Mortimer Sang came to him with a courteous message

from Sir Andrew Stewart, begging to know if it was his pleasure to hunt for a few hours; and Hepborne having cheerfully agreed to the proposal, the two knights met alone at breakfast, and then crossed to the mainland with their horses, hounds, hunting-gear, and a few attendants, to scour the neighbouring forest for deer.

As they were returning homewards towards evening, they heard the echoing sound of bugles—

"'Tis my father," said Sir Andrew; "'tis the Earl returning with his party from Badenoch; see, there they come, breaking forth from yonder woodshaws."

It was indeed the Wolfe of Badenoch; but he was now in very different array from that which he had first appeared in to Hepborne. He was clad from head to foot in a complete suit of bright plate armour, and his height and bulk seemed to be increased by the metamorphosis. He rode at the head of a gallant troop of well-mounted and well-equipped spearmen, after which marched a company of footmen, consisting of pole-axe-men and bowmen. His sons, Sir Alexander, Walter, and James, rode proudly by his side. The cavalcade went at a foot pace, because a rabble of bare-legged and bare-headed tatterdemalion moun-

taineers ran before them, armed with clubs, goads, and pikes, and driving along a promiscuous herd of cows, bullocks, sheep, and goats, of all different ages and descriptions, which considerably retarded their march. A bugle-man preceded the whole, bearing aloft an otter-skin purse on the point of a spear. His banner waved in the middle of the clump of spears; and in the rear of all followed a tired and straggling band of men, women, and children, who were grieving loudly, and weeping sadly, for some dire injury they had sustained, and vociferating vain appeals in their own language to the stern Wolfe, who, with his vizor up, and his brows knit, rode on unheeding them.

Ere the parties met, the two boys, Walter and James, galloped up to meet their brother, Sir Andrew, and both began at once to shout out their news to him—

"Oh, brother Andrew, brother Andrew, we have had such sport!" cried the one.

"Nay, thou knowest not what thou hast lost, brother Andrew, by not being with us," cried the other.

"Father hath seized——" shouted Walter.

"The Earl hath taken possession of——" interrupted James.

"Tut, hold thy gabbling tongue, James, and let me tell," responded Walter.

"Nay, but I will tell it," cried James lustily.

"By the holy Rood, but I will not be interrupted," screamed out Walter.

"By the bishop's mass, then, but I will tell out mine own tale in spite of thee," bellowed James; "the Earl hath seized, I say——"

"Confound thee, then," roared out Walter in a frenzy, and at the same time bestowing a hearty thwack with the shaft of his spear across his brother's shoulders—"confound thine impudence, take that for thine insolence.

The no less irascible James was by no means slow in returning the compliment, and they began to beat one another about the head with great good-will; nay, it is probable that their wrath might have even induced them to resort to the points of their weapons, had they been equal to the management of their fiery steeds; but the spirited animals became restive in the bicker, and plunging two or three times, the youths, more attentive to mauling each other than to their horsemanship, lost their seats, and in one and the same instant both were laid prostrate on the plain. Some of the followers of the hunting party caught their palfreys, and raised the enraged boys, who would have re-

newed their fight on foot had they not been held back.

"Oh, ye silly fools," said Sir Andrew, smiling coolly and contemptuously upon them; "as the old cock croweth, so, forsooth, the chicks must needs ape his song. Have done with your absurd and impotent wrath." And leaving them in the hands of the attendants, he rode slowly forward with Hepborne to meet his father.

"What!" demanded the Wolfe, laughing heartily, "were those cockerels pecking at each other?"

"Yea," replied Sir Andrew, "a trifling dispute between them, which I have quashed."

"Pshaw," replied the Wolfe; "by the beard of my grandfather, but I like to see their spirit; let not thy drowsy control quell it in them, son Andrew. I would not have them tame kestrels like thee, for all the broad lands of my father's kingdom; so leave them to me to tutor, son Andrew, dost hear?—Sir Patrick," said he, turning to Hepborne, "I hope thou hast not suffered in thine entertainment by mine absence? I should crave thy pardon, I wis, for leaving thee so suddenly, and perhaps so rudely; but I have let off my dammed-up wrath since I last saw thee, and shall now be better

company. By this trusty burly-brand, I have shorn off the best plumes from the plump Bishop Barr; I have seized the fat lands he held in the very midst of my Badenoch territory. By the infernal fiends I swore, that he should pay for his busy intermeddling in my family affairs, and, by all the powers of darkness and desolation, I have faithfully kept mine oath. I have hameled his pride, I trow. He shall know what it is to have to do with the Wolfe of Badenoch. He holds earth no more there. These are the custom-cattle of his lands, and there dangleth the rent and the grassums gathered from his knave tenants. Such of the churls who were refractory I have driven forth, and put good men of mine own in their room. Begone with ye, ye screaming pewits," cried he, angrily turning towards the wretched train of men and women who followed his party, and couching his lance as if he would have charged furiously at them—"begone with ye, I say, or, by the fires of the infernal realms, I will put every he and she of ye instantly to the sword!"

The miserable wretches, without a house to go to, ran off into the woods at his terrible threat, and the ferocious Wolfe rode on with his party. When they came to the water's edge, the bugles sounded, and a boat being instantly

manned by six rowers, the Wolfe called to Sir Patrick Hepborne to go along with him, and they were wafted across in a few strokes of the oar, leaving Sir Alexander Stewart and his brothers to superintend the embarkation of the booty. All in the Castle was stir and bustle the moment the owner of it appeared. The oldest man in it seemed to be endowed with additional muscular action at the very presence of the Wolfe. They were all ranked up to receive him as he entered the gateway, and they followed him, and darted off one by one, like arrows, in various directions, as he gave his hasty orders.

CHAPTER IV.

The Wolfe and Sir Patrick Hepborne had no sooner entered the banquet-hall, than they were surprised by the appearance of the Lady Mariota, who approached them, from a room beyond it, drowned in tears.

"Eh!" cried the Wolfe, setting his teeth against each other; "ha! morte de ma vie, what is this I behold? Mariota in tears? Say, speak, why art thou thus bywoxen? What, in the fiend's name, is the matter? Who hath caused these tears? Speak, and by all the infernal demons, I will have him flayed alive."

"My lord," replied the Lady Mariota, hiding her face in her kerchief, "I can hardly speak it—the page—the page Maurice de Grey——"

"Say, Lady, what of him? I beseech thee, what of him?" cried Sir Patrick, anxiously. "Hath any ill befallen him?"

"Nay," said the Lady; "would that had

been all I had to tell!—Oh, how shall I speak it?—the wretch, taking advantage of my being left alone, dared to insult me. I fled forth from the apartment where I had unconsciously received him, and having called the attendants, I had him secured, and he is now a prisoner in the dungeon."

Hepborne was petrified with horror and amazement at this accusation against Maurice de Grey.

"Ha!" cried the Wolfe, "by my beard, thou didst bravely indeed, my girl.—The red fiend catch me, but he shall forthwith swing for it. A gallows and a halter, there in the court-yard. By all the grim powers of hell, he shall dangle ere we dine."

"Nay, nay, my lord," said Hepborne, sternly yet calmly, "that may not be without a trial. The youth is mine, and I am thy guest. I demand a fair trial for him; if he be guilty, then let him suffer for his coulpe; but until his guilt be proved, depardieux, I shall stand forth his defender."

"By the holy Rood, but thou speakest boldly, Sir Knight," cried the Wolfe, gnashing his teeth in ire. "Art thou then prepared to fight at outrance for thy minion?"

"My lord," said Hepborne coolly, "I am here as thy guest. Whilst I am under thy roof, I trust the common rules of hospitality will bind us both; but shouldest thou rid thyself of their salutary shakles, I must prepare myself to do my best to resist oppression, as a good and true knight ought to do. I ask but fair trial for the boy, which, in justice, thou canst not and wilt not refuse me."

The Wolfe paced the room backwards and forwards for some time, with a hurried step, whilst the Lady Mariota sat sobbing in a chair.

"Mariota," said he at length, "thou wert alone when the page came to thee?"

"I was, my good lord," replied the lady; "my damsels had gone forth at the time he entered my chamber."

"Now, Sir Patrick Hepborne," exclaimed the Wolfe, "now thou must of needscost see that all proof here is out of the question. Where can proof be had where there hath been no witnesses?"

"Yea, my lord," said Hepborne, temperately, "what thou sayest is true, in good faith; and it is also true that, without proof, there can be no just condemnation."

The Wolfe began again to pace the room hastily, his eyes flashing fire.

"What, Sir Knight," exclaimed he, "dost thou go so far as to doubt the word of the Lady Mariota? By the devil's mass, but thou art bold indeed."

"I say not that I doubt the word of the Lady Mariota," replied Hepborne; "but were the Lady Mariota my sister, and the page Maurice de Grey my greatest enemy, I would not condemn him capitally on her simple saying."

"Mariota," cried the Wolfe in a rage, "leave the apartment; get thee to thy chamber. By the martyrdom of St Andrew, but thou dost beard me, Sir Knight. Thou presumest on my old dotard father's introduction of thee, and on the frail laws of hospitality, which may indeed bind me to a certain point; but beware thou dost push me beyond it—or, by my beard, neither he nor they shall protect thee."

"Most noble Earl of Buchan," replied Hepborne, with perfect temper and sang-froid, "again I say, that all I ask is justice. To that point only do I wish to push thee, nor do I fear but thou wilt go so far. I do confess, it seemeth somewhat strange to me, to hear so foul a charge against a boy, who hath ever sought to fly the Lady Mariota's advances. Nay, 'twas but yesternight that she came herself to seek him on the rampart, where the youth held idle

parlance with me; and though he tried to shun her, verily these eyes beheld her as she did coarct him to go with her, the which the boy did most unwillingly."

The Wolfe of Badenoch knit his brows, and strode two or three times through the long hall, the arched roof ringing again to the clang of his heel as he moved. He seemed to be pondering within himself what to resolve, an operation to the fatigue of which he rarely ever subjected his mind, his general practice being to act first, and then, if ever he thought at all, to think afterwards. At length he stopped short in his career, opposite to where Hepborne was standing, with his arms calmly folded across his breast; and, stretching out his hand to him—

"Sir Patrick," said he, "thou art right. I have perhaps been a little hasty here. There is much in what thou hast said; and I honour thee for thy cool and determined courage and temper.—Listen to me then. If the page Maurice de Grey confesseth the coulpe of which he is charged, thou wilt not call it injustice if he be instantly ordered for execution. If he denies it, then let him, or some one for him, do duel with me to-morrow, as soon as light may serve us; and may God and the Blessed Virgin de-

fend the right, and make his innocence clear if he be sans coulpe."

"Agreed," said Hepborne. "I stand forth the boy's defender, and will cheerfully appeal to wager of single combat in his behalf. Let him straightway be sent for then, and let him be questioned with regard to his guilt or innocence; all I ask for him is full and free speech."

"He shall have it," cried the Wolfe; "I swear by my beard, he shall have full power to speak as he lists. Pardieux, 'tis well we determine this matter one way or other forthwith, for I long to dine."

"What is this I hear?" cried Sir Alexander Stewart, entering in a fury; "what is this I hear? My mother insulted by a minion page! By the ghost of my grandfather, the miscreant shall die ere I eat a morsel. Why doth he not swing even now? What hath delayed his execution?"

"Silence, Sandy," cried the Wolfe angrily; "the matter is already arranged without thine interference. The youth comes anon to be questioned. If he confesses, the popinjay shall straightway grace the gallows in the court-yard; if he denies, then is Sir Patrick Hepborne pre-

pared to do battle in his cause, against me, by to-morrow's sun."

"Let that glory be mine, then, I beseech thee, my noble father," cried Sir Alexander eagerly; "I claim the right of doing battle in defence of my mother's cause."

"Well, Alexander," said the Wolfe gruffly, "if it so please Sir Patrick Hepborne, I scruple not to yield him to thee."

"My appeal," said Sir Patrick, "is against one and all who may singly choose to challenge mine arm, and who may be pleased to succeed one another in the single combat I am willing to wage in defence of the youth Maurice de Grey."

"Hey day!" cried the Wolfe; "gramercy, Sir Knight, then, by mine honest and trusty burly-brand, thou shalt have thy bellyful of it, and I shall not resign the first place to my son Alexander. We shall tilt it first, so please thee. At sunrise we shall bestir ourselves, and on the open lawnde beyond the land sconce, we shall try the metal of our armour and lance heads. If thou escapest mine arm, Sandy may have thee, if he likes; but the red fiend's curse upon it if it fail me. Ha! here comes the prisoner."

The page Maurice de Grey now entered, wear-

ing chains about his wrists. His countenance was placid and composed, and he advanced with a firm step and undisturbed manner.

"Knowest thou, Sir Page, of what coulpe thou art accused?" demanded the Wolfe sternly.

"I do," replied the youth calmly.

"Dost thou admit or deny the charge the Lady Mariota hath made against thee?"

"I most solemnly deny it," replied the page.

"Ha!" cried the Wolfe, "then is there no more to be said. Let him be removed; and let everything be prepared for a single combat tomorrow between Sir Patrick Hepborne and me, —the place to be the lawnde beyond the land sconce; and the time, the moment the welkin sees the sun. 'Tis well 'tis so soon settled. Now let us dine, Sir Patrick. We may be merry companions to-night, though we be to fight like fiends i' the morning. The banquet, I say—the banquet. Why dost thou tarry with thy prisoner?"

"One word, I pray," said Maurice de Grey, now thrown into extreme agitation by hearing that his master's life was to be put in jeopardy for him—"I crave one word ere I go."

"My lord," said Sir Patrick to the Wolfe, "I claim thy solemn behote; thou didst pro-

mise free and ample speech for the youth; hear him then, I beseech thee."

"Well, youth, well," cried the Wolfe, very impatiently, "what hast thou to say? Be quick, for time wears, and hunger galls me; be quick, I say."

"I demand a private conference, noble earl," said the page. "I have something to unfold that will altogether change the complexion of this case. If I do not make the Lady Mariota clear me of all guilt, I hereby agree to hold myself as condemned to instant death, and shall patiently submit to whatever fate thou may'st award me."

"Nay, nay, dear Maurice," cried Hepborne anxiously, and putting more faith in his own prowess than in anything the page could urge to convince the Lady Mariota, of whose villainous falsehood, in the foul charge she had brought against the youth, he had been fully convinced from the first—"nay, nay, dear Maurice, rather leave the matter as it is; rather—"

"By the bloody hide of St Bartholomew," cried the Wolfe, with evident joy, "but the boy shall have his way. We shall thus have this mysterious affair cleared up, and settled forthwith, instead of delaying till to-morrow. By the mass, but he hath excited queer thoughts

in my mind. But we shall see anon. Come, then, let him along with me, that I may show him to the Lady Mariota's apartment. I swear by the holy Rood, Sir Patrick, that the youth shall have justice—justice to the fullest extent of what he hath demanded. Clear the way, then, I say; come, Sir Page, come along; thou shalt dance hither anon at freedom, or thou shalt dangle it and dance it on the gallows-tree below, where many as brave and stout a youth as thou hath figured before thee. Come on, I say."

After the Earl and the page were gone, Sir Alexander Stewart paced the hall in gloomy silence, his fiery soul boiling within him, so that he could with difficulty restrain his rage. Every now and then a stamp on the pavement, louder than the rest, proclaimed the excess of his internal agitation. The cool Sir Andrew sat him quietly down, without uttering a word, or appearing to be much interested in the matter at issue. The three boys had not yet come in, but a crowd of the retainers, who were usually admitted to sit below the salt, stood in groups whispering at the lower end of the hall. Sir Patrick Hepborne had been rendered so unhappy by the turn the affair had taken, and was so oppressed with distress, anxiety, and

dread as to the result, that he thrust himself into the deep recess of one of the windows, to hide those emotions he felt it impossible to repress. Not a word passed between the chief persons of the scene. The time, which was in reality not in itself long, appeared to Hepborne like an age; and yet, when at length he did hear steps and voices approaching along the passage, leading from the Lady Mariota's apartment unto the banqueting-hall,—brave as he was, he trembled like a coward, lest the moment should have come too soon for the unhappy page.

The door opened, and the Wolfe entered, frowning and gnashing his teeth. Then came the page, freed from his fetters. The Wolfe of Badenoch's red eye was disturbed from recent ire, which he seemed even yet to keep down with difficulty; yet he laughed horribly from time to time as he spoke.

"Ha! well," said he, "the page Maurice de Grey hath proved his innocence beyond further question. By the blood of the Bruce—ha! ha! ha!—but it is ridiculous after all. The red fiend catch me if I—but, pshaw!—let us have the banquet," cried he, hastily interrupting himself in something he was going to say—"the banquet, I tell thee.—Give me thy hand,

Sir Patrick. Thou wert afraid to trust thy beauteous page with me, wert thou ?—Ha ! ha ! ha !—Thou would'st rather have fought me at outrance.—By'r Lady, but thou art a burly knight; but I like thee not the worse.—Depardieux, but thou art safe enow in my hands; trust me, thou shalt hear no more on't.—Ha ! ha ! ha ! I confess that thy page is as innocent —I hereby free him from guilt. The banquet, knaves—the banquet.—Ha ! the curse of the devil's dam on me, if I could have looked for this."

"What strange mystery is here ?" said Sir Alexander Stewart, impatiently. "Where is the Lady Mariota my mother ?"

The Wolfe had all this time been reining in his wrath with his utmost power; it was all he could do to curb it; and it was ready to burst all bounds at the first provocation that offered.

"Better hold thy peace, Sir Alexander," cried he, darting an angry glance at him. "By the infernal flames, I am in no humour to listen to thy folly. I have pledged my sacred word as a knight to secrecy, and thou nor no one shall know aught of this mystery, as thou callest it. Be contented to know that the boy Maurice is innocent."

"And am I to be satisfied with this ?" cried

Sir Alexander, his wrath kindling more and more as he spoke; "am I to remain satisfied with this, without my mother's word for it?"

"Nay," said the Wolfe, hastily, "by the holy Rood, thou shalt have no word from thy mother to-night."

"No word from my mother!" exclaimed Sir Alexander. "What! dost thou treat me as a child?—By all the fiends, but I shall see her though.—Where is she?—Why doth she not appear?—By the holy mass, but I must see her, and that instantly."

"By the martyrdom of St Andrew, then," cried the Wolfe, gnashing his teeth, and foaming at the mouth from very ire—"by the martyrdom of St Andrew, but thou shalt not see her. I have sent her to cool her passions in the dungeon to the which she had consigned the page: and, hark ye, son Alexander, if thou darest to prate any more about her, by all the fiery fiends of Erebus, but thou shalt occupy the next chamber to that assigned her, there to remain during my pleasure. Ha! what sayest thou to that, Sir Alexander?"

"I say thou art a tyrant and a beast," exclaimed his son, broiling with rage; "and if thou dost not instantly liberate my mother, by all the powers of darkness, I will choke thee in

thine armour:" and he strode across the banquet-hall in a frenzy, to put his threat into immediate execution.

"Halt!" cried Sir Patrick Hepborne, in a voice like thunder, as he stepped before the Earl, and planted himself directly in the assailant's way—"halt, Sir Alexander Stewart—halt, I say. Let reason come to thine aid, and let not ungovernable passion lead thee to lay impious hands on him to whom thou owest thine existence."

"Nay, let him come on," cried the Wolfe, his eyes glaring ferociously.

"Stand aside, Sir Patrick Hepborne," cried Sir Alexander, "or, by all the fiends of perdition, thou shalt suffer for thine interference; stand back, I say, and leave us to——"

"Nay," cried Hepborne, firmly, "I will not back; and by St Baldrid I swear, that thou shalt do no injury to thy sire until thou shalt have stepped over my body."

"Say'st thou so?" cried Sir Alexander, his eyes flashing like firebrands—"then have at thee, Sir Knight;" and, catching up a truncheon that lay near, he wielded it with both hands, and aimed a blow at Sir Patrick's head, that would have speedily levelled a patent way

for his fury over the prostrate body of the knight, had he not dodged alertly aside, so that it fell harmless to the ground; and then, with one tremendous blow of his fist, he laid the raging maniac senseless on the floor of the hall.

"Bind him," cried the Wolfe, "bind him instantly, I say, and carry him to the dungeon under the northern tower; he is a prisoner until our pleasure shall pronounce him free."

His orders were instantly and implicitly obeyed, and Sir Alexander was carried off, without sense or motion, under the charge of his jailors. Sir Patrick was shocked at the outrageous scene he had witnessed, in which he had been driven to interfere. Though satisfied of the justice of the Earl's sentence against his son, yet he was concerned to think that he had been instrumental in effecting it, and he conceived he was bound to endeavour to mediate in his behalf.

"Nay, nay," said the Wolfe, hastily, "I thank thee heartily for the chastisement thou hast given the whelp. To loose him now, were to deprive him of all its salutary effects. By the blessed Rood, he shall lie in his dungeon until he comes so far to his senses as to make a humble submission both to thee and to me.—

What! am I to be bearded at every turning by my boys?—The red fiend catch me, but they and the callot that whelped them shall down to the bottom of the deepest abyss of Lochyndore, ere I shall suffer myself to be so disgraced by her, and snarled at by her litter."

Sir Patrick looked towards Sir Andrew Stewart for aid in his attempt to soften the Earl; but, cool and cautious, he had never stirred from his seat during the fray, and still sat there unmoved, turning a deaf ear to his father's stormy threats, and averting his eye from Hepborne's silent appeal.

"Come, come, the banquet, knaves," cried the Wolfe. "Why stand ye all staring like gaze-hounds? The red fiend catch ye, but I will hang up half a dozen of ye like a string of beads, an we have not our meal in the twinkling of an eye!"

The lacqueys and attendants had hitherto been standing in silence and horror, but they were all put instantly in motion. The banquet appeared. The Wolfe ate more voraciously than usual, and swallowed deeper draughts of wine also than he ordinarily did; but it was evidently rather to wash down some vexation that oppressed him, than from anything like jollity.

His conversation was hasty and abrupt, and after drinking double his wonted quantity in half the usual time, he broke up the feast, and retired to his apartment.

CHAPTER V.

As Sir Patrick Hepborne retired to his apartment, he called Maurice de Grey, to inquire into the mysterious means by which he had so effectually defeated the false charge which had been brought against him; but the youth hung his head in answer to his master's inquiries, and hesitated in replying to them.

"Sir Knight," said he at length, "there hath been a mutual promise passed on both sides, that neither the Earl of Buchan nor I shall reveal what did pass in the converse held between him, the Lady Mariota, and myself, at our conference. I am therefore compelled to refuse thee that satisfaction which I should otherwise be glad to yield thee."

With this answer Hepborne was compelled to remain satisfied, and the page being suffered to depart, he retired to rest.

Next morning the Wolfe and he met at breakfast, where were also Sir Andrew and the young-

er brothers, but the Lady Mariota, with her eldest son Sir Alexander, were absent.

"My Lord of Buchan," said Sir Patrick, as they sat together, "I presume not to touch thee on the subject of the Lady Mariota, because, with regard to her, I can have no plea or right to interfere; but wilt thou suffer me to entreat thee again in behalf of thy son Sir Alexander Stewart? It grieveth me much that I should in any way have contributed to his punishment, however greatly he may have merited thy chastisement. Forgive me, I beseech thee, for being thus solicitous, but, as an especial boon granted to myself, I crave his liberation."

"Ha! well, Sir Patrick," said the Wolfe, after listening to him with more patience and moderation of aspect than he usually exhibited; "it is somewhat strange that thou and the child Duncan are the only two persons who have had the heart to make any appeal to me, either about my son Alexander, or his mother." And as he said so, he darted an indignant and reproachful glance towards Sir Andrew, who, as if nothing amiss had occurred, had been talking of the weather, and of hunting, and was at that moment helping himself largely to venison pasty. "As for Sir Andrew there, he cares not who suffereth, so that his craven bouke be well fossed

with food, like a kite as he is. True indeed is the saying, that misfortunes try hearts. But trust me, I thank thee as heartily for the tenderness thou hast displayed, as for the spirit thou didst show yesternight in checking that foolish boy Alexander. Let me but finish my meal, then, and I shall hie me straight to the dungeons of the prisoners, and observe in what temper they may now be, after a night's cooling, when I shall judge and act accordingly."

The Earl having gone in pursuance of this resolution, returned, after a considerable absence, followed by the Lady Mariota and his son. Both seemed to have been effectually humbled. The lady's face bore ample traces of the night of wretchedness she had spent. She curtseyed with an air, as if she hoped that the forced smile she wore would melt away all remembrance of what had passed; and then, without saying a word, sidled off to her apartment. Sir Alexander Stewart came forward manfully. His brow still bore the black mark of Hepborne's fist, that had prostrated him on the floor, "as butcher felleth ox," yet the blow seemed to have been by this time effaced from his remembrance.

"Sir Patrick," said he, stretching out his hand, "my father tells me that I owe my libe-

ration to thee. Thou hast behaved generously in this matter. The Earl hath given me to know such circumstances as sufficiently explain his seeming harshness to my mother. I now see that I was hasty, and I am sorry for it."

Hepborne readily shook hands with the humbled knight.

"And now let us hunt," cried the Wolfe.—"Horses and hounds there, and the foresters and gear for the chase:" and away went the whole party, to cross to the mainland.

They returned at night, after a successful day's hunting, and the Wolfe of Badenoch was in peculiarly good spirits. The banquet was graced by the Lady Mariota, as usual, tricked out in all her finery, and wearing her accustomed dimpling smiles; and the Earl seemed to have forgotten that he had ever had any cause of displeasure against her. Instead of the marked attention she had formerly paid to Maurice de Grey, however, she now, much to his satisfaction, treated him with politeness, free from that disgusting and offensive doating, which had heretofore so much tormented the poor youth. The Wolfe ate voraciously, and drank deeply; and his mirth rose with the wine he swallowed to so great a pitch of jollity, that he roared out loudly for music.

"Can no one sing me a roundelay?" cried he. "Mariota, thou knowest not a single warble, nor is there, I trow, one in the Castle that can touch even a citrial or a guittern, far less a harp. Would that our scoundrel Allan Stewart were here, but—a plague on him!—he hath gone to visit his friends in Badenoch. He could have given us romaunces, ballads, and virelays enow, I warrant thee."

"My Lord Earl," said the page modestly, "had I but a harp, in truth I should do my best to pleasure thee, though I can promise but little for my skill."

"Well said, boy," cried the Wolfe. "By the mass, but thou shalt have a harp. Ho, there! —bring hither Allan Stewart's harp. The knave hath two, and it is to be hoped he hath not carried both with him."

The harp was brought, and Maurice de Grey having tuned it, began to accompany himself in the following ballad.

THERE was a damsel loved a knight,
  You'll weep to hear her story,
For he ne'er guess'd her heart's sad plight,
  Nor cared for aught but glory.

Lured by its bright and dazzling gleam,
  He left the woe-worn maiden,
Nor in her eyes beheld the beam
  Of love, from heart o'erladen.

She sigh'd ; her sighs ne'er touch'd his ear,
  For still his heart was bounding
For neighing steeds, and clashing spear,
  And warlike bugle sounding.

She wept ; but though he saw her tears,
  He dreamt not he had wrought them,
But ween'd that woman's idle fears,
  Or silly woes, had brought them.

He left her then to weep alone,
  And droop in secret sadness,
Like some fair lily early blown,
  'Reft of the sunbeam's gladness.

But love will make e'en maidens dare
  What most their sex hath frighten'd ;
Beneath a helm she crush'd her hair,
  In steel her bosom brighten'd.

She seized a lance, she donn'd a brand,
  A sprightly war-horse bore her,
She hied her to the Holy Land,
  Where went her Knight before her.

She sought him out, she won his heart,
  Amidst the battle's bluster ;
As friends they ne'er were seen to part,
  Howe'er the foes might cluster.

But ah !—I grieve to tell the tale !—
  A random arrow flying,
Pierced through her corslet's jointed mail,
  And down she fell a-dying.

He bore her quickly from the field,
  Through Paynim ranks opposing,
But when her helmet was unseal'd,
  Her maiden blush disclosing,

He cried, " Blest Virgin be our aid !
  What piteous sight appals me!
It is—it is that gentle maid,
  Whose lovely form still thralls me.

Lift, lift those heavy drooping eyes,
  And with one kind look cheer me!"
She smiled like beam in freezing skies,
  "Ah, Rodolph, art thou near me?

"My life ebbs fast, my heart's blood flows,
  That long hath beat for thee, love;
And still for thee my bosom glows,
  Though death's hand is on me, love.

"For thee in secret did I sigh,
  Nor ween'd that love could warm thee,
Nor that my lustre-lacking eye
  Could e'er have power to charm thee."

"Nay, Angeline," cried Rodolph, then,
  "I wist not that I loved thee,
Till left my home, and native glen,
  Remembrance of thee moved me.

"Like him who wooes not health nor joy,
  Till lost are both the treasures,
My heart held love as childish toy,
  Nor cared to sip its pleasures.

"But follow'd by thy form so fair,
  I saw it on each billow;
I saw it float in empty air—
  It hover'd o'er my pillow.

"And e'en when hardy deeds I wrought,
  'Midst murderous ranks contending,
Thy figure ever fill'd my thought,
  Mine arm new vigour lending.

"And then the fame of deeds of arms
  Had lost all power to cheer me,
Save that, methought, its dazzling charms
  To thee might yet endear me.

"And have I pluck'd these laurels green,
  To deck thy dying brow, love?
Oh, lift for once those lovely een,
  To hear my plighted vow, love!"

"I'm happy now," she faintly said,
"But, oh, 'tis cruel to sever!"—
Upon his breast her head she laid,
And closed her eyes for ever.

"Sir Page," cried the Wolfe, at the close of this ballad, "by my knighthood, but thou dost sing and harp it better than Allan Stewart himself, though thy lays are something of the saddest. Meseems it thou didst ween that our mirth had waxed somewhat too high, and that it lacked a damper. In sooth," continued he, turning to Hepborne with an arch look, "thou art much to be envied, Sir Patrick, for the possession of this lovely, this accomplished—ha! ha! ha!—this—this boy of thine—ha! ha! ha! —this Maurice de Grey.—Come, Maurice, my sweet youth," said he, addressing the page, "essay again to tune thy throat, and let it, I beseech thee, be in a strain more jocund than the last. Here, quaff wine, boy, to give thee jollier heart."

"Thanks, my noble lord," replied Maurice de Grey, "I will exert my poor powers to fulfil thy wishes without drinking."

And, taking up the harp again, he ran his fingers nimbly over the strings, with great display of execution, in a sprightly prelude, enlivening his auditors, and preparing them to

sympathize with something more in unison with the highly-screwed cords of the Earl's heart, when he was suddenly interrupted by the appearance of a new personage.

A tall monk of the order of St Francis suddenly entered, and, gliding like a spirit into the middle of the hall, darted a pair of keen searching eyes towards the upper end of the festive board.

"What! ha! brother of St Francis," cried the Wolfe of Badenoch, "what would'st thou? If thou be'st wayfaring, and need cheer, sit thee down there at the end of our festive board, and call for what thou lackest."

The Franciscan stood mute and unmoved, with his cowl over his head, and his arms folded across his breast. The silver lamps threw a pale light upon his face, and his shadow rose gigantically upon the wall.

"Whence comest thou?—Speak!" cried the Wolfe, impatiently. "Are we to be kept waiting all night, till thou dost choose to effunde the cause of thy strange visitation?"

"Alexander Stewart, Earl of Buchan, and Lord of Badenoch," said the Franciscan slowly, and in a deep solemn tone; "Alexander Stewart, I come here as the messenger of the Bishop of Moray, to tell thee that the tidings of thy

daring, outrageous, and sacrilegious seizure of the lands belonging to the Holy Church, have reached him: the cries alswa of the helpless peasants, whom thou hast outed from their dwellings, have sounded in his ears. Thy cruelties are bruited abroad from one end of the kingdom to the other, and it is now time that thy savage career should be arrested. The godly Bishop doth, through me, his organ of speech, call on thee to give up the lands thou hast sacrilegiously seized in Badenoch; to restore the plundered herds and flocks, and the rents thou hast theftuously taken by masterful strength; to replace those honest and innocent peasants, who, resisting thy aggression, like true vassals, were, with their wives and little ones, driven from their homes and possessions, by thee in thy brutish fury; and, finally, to make such reparation to Holy Mother Church, by fine to her treasuries, and personal abasement before her altars, as may stay her just wrath against thee. In default of all which, the holy Bishop hath commanded me to announce to thee, that the lesser and greater excommunications shall go forth against thee; and that thou shalt be accursed as a vagabond on the face of this earth, and damned to all eternity in the next world."

The fiery and ferocious Wolfe of Badenoch

was so utterly confounded by, what he considered, the unexampled audacity of this denunciation, that amazement kept him silent from absolute want of words, otherwise his limited stock of patience could not have endured the Franciscan till he had uttered the tenth part of his long speech. He gnashed his teeth, curled up his nose, and foamed at the mouth; and striking the table furiously, as was his custom when violently moved, he shouted out—

"Ha! Devils! Furies! Fiends of Erebus! What is this I hear? The Earl of Buchan—the son of a King—the Wolfe of Badenoch to be thus insulted by a chough! Out, thou carrion-hooded crow! Thinkest thou to brave me down with thine accursed crawing? By the beard of my grandfather, but thou shalt swing twenty ell high, an thou voidest not the Castle of thy loathsome carcase, in less time than thou didst ware in effunding one-fourth part of thy venomous and impudent harangue."

The monk stood motionless, in the same fixed and composed attitude he had at first assumed, altogether unmoved by these tremendous threats.

"Alexander Stewart, Earl of Buchan, and Lord of Badenoch," he again repeated in the same slow and solemn manner, "I call upon

thee again to declare, whether thou be'st disposed to submit thyself patiently to the healthful discipline of our holy Mother Church? or whether thou be'st resolved that she shall cut thee off, like a rotten and diseased branch, to fall headlong into the pit where eternal fire shall consume thee? Already, ere this, hadst thou incurred her just vengeance, by living in abominable adultery with Mariota Athyn, thy wanton leman, who now sitteth an abomination beside thee; and by the abandonment of thy leal, true, and virtuous wife, whom thou hast left to mourn in a worse than widowhood. In addition to the solemn appeal I have already made, I am commanded to call on thee now to fulfil the sentence of the Bishops of Moray and Ross, to pay down two hundred broad pieces of gold as the mulct of thine offence, and forthwith to discharge thy foul and sinful mate, and recall to thy bosom her who hath the true and lawful claim to lay her head there. Wilt thou do these things, yea or not?"

This ripping-up of the old feud, not only redoubled the rage of the Wolfe of Badenoch, but roused that of the Lady Mariota and her sons. She burst into a flood of tears, a violent fit of sobbing followed, and she finally rushed from the banquet-hall. The hot and fierce Sir Alex-

ander was broiling with fury; but the Wolfe took the speech of him——

"Ha! so thou hast come to the kernel of this matter at last, thou ape of Satan, hast thou? Now I do clearly ken how far I was right in guessing at the tale-pyet that chattered in the ear of the King my father. But, by the blood of the Bruce, I have revenged his impertinent meddling, by ousting him from the roost he had in my lands; and, by all the hot fiends of perdition, if he rouseth the Wolfe of Badenoch more, his neck shall be twisted about. Art content with my answer now, thou hooded carrion-crow?"

"Alexander Stewart, Earl of Buchan, and Lord of Badenoch," said the Franciscan, with the same imperturbable gravity, firmness, and composure, "hast thou no better response than this to make to the holy Bishop of Moray? Bethink thee well——"

"Scoundrel chough, begone!" cried the Wolfe, interrupting him. "Thou hast already more than outstaid my patience, which hath in itself been miraculous. If thou wouldest escape hence in safety, avoid thee instantly; for if thou goest not in the twinkling of an eye, may infernal demons seize me if thou shalt have leave to go at all."

"Then, Alexander Stewart," said the Franciscan, "the Bishop's curse be upon thee and upon thine; for thou shalt be an outcast from our holy Mother Church, and——"

"And the red fiend's curse be upon thee and the split-crown'd Bishop!" cried the Wolfe, interrupting him. "Why stand these kestrel rogues to see their lord, to see the Wolfe of Badenoch flouted by that stinking and venomous weasel? Seize the vermin, knaves, and let him be tossed into the Water-Pit-Vault; if I mistake not, the Loch is high enow at present to keep him company there; but, let him sink or swim, I care not; away with the toad, I say. He may thank his good stars that I give him a chance for his life. By the infernal host, I was much tempted to string him up without more ado, to the gallows in the court-yard, that he might dance a bargaret for our sport, sith he hath spoilt our mirth and music by his ill-omened croaking. Away with him, I say!"

"Beware of touching the servant of Heaven," cried the firm and undismayed Franciscan; "whosoever dareth to lay impious hands on me, shall be subjected to the same curse as the sacrilegious tyrant who sitteth yonder."

"Why stand ye hesitating, knaves?" roared the Wolfe. "Let him not utter another word,

or, by the pit of darkness, I shall have ye all flayed alive."

The Franciscan's threat had operated too strongly on the lackeys, to permit them to secure the monk with their own hands; yet, afraid to risk their master's hasty displeasure, one or two of them had not scrupled to fly off for the jailors and executioners of the Castle, men who, like tutored bears, had neither fears nor hopes, nor, indeed, thoughts of aught else but obedience to the will of a master, engrafted upon their savage natures by early nurture and long usage. Four or five of these entered as the Wolfe of Badenoch was speaking. They appeared like creatures that had inhabited the bowels of the earth; bulky of bone and muscle, their hair and beards were long and matted, their eyes inanimate and unfeeling, and their hands, features, and garments, alike coarse and begrimed with filth, as if the blood of their murderous trade still adhered to them.

"Ha! ay! there ye come, my trusty terriers; seize that polecat there in the cowl, and toss him into the Water-Pit-Vault; quick, away with him!"

The bold Franciscan had trusted to the sanctity of his character, but he had presumed too far on its protecting influence; these reckless

minions of the Wolfe had him in their fell gripe in an instant, and dragged him unresisting towards the door of the banquet-hall, as if he had been but a huge black goat. There, however, his eyes happened to catch the figure and countenance of the page, Maurice de Grey; he started, and, in spite of the nervous exertions of the ruffians who had him in charge, planted his feet so firmly on the pavement, that he compelled them to halt, while he stood for a moment fixed like a Colossus, darting a keen look at the page. The boy's eyes sunk beneath the sternness of his gaze.

"Thou here!" exclaimed he with an expression of extreme surprise; "by what miracle do I behold thee here? Would that I had seen thee before—would that I had known——"

But the sturdy and callous knaves who held him, noticed his sudden halt and mysterious speech no otherwise than they would have done the voice or struggles of the goat we have compared him to; they only put forth a little more strength, and, before he could get another word out, whirled him through the door-way, and lugged him sprawling down the stair. Hepborne had been more than once on the eve of interceding for the monk, but he saw that anything he could have said would have been of

little avail, amidst the general fury that prevailed against him, and might have even provoked a more immediate and fatal vengeance; so that all thoughts of running a hopeless tilt in his behalf, against the highly-excited ferocity of the Stewarts, were abandoned by him for the present.

The Wolfe of Badenoch was too much unhinged in temper, by the visit of the Franciscan monk, to be in a humour to prolong the feast.

"Caitiff! carrion! corby!" cried he after he was gone; "the red fiend swallow me, but the bold Bishop shall bide for the return of his messenger. Ho! bring me that stoup, knave."

He put the stoup of Rhenish to his head, and quaffing a potent draught from it, set it down on the table with a violent crash, and calling out, "Lights there—lights for the apartments," broke up the feast.

CHAPTER VI.

Sir Patrick Hepborne went to his room, determined to leave Lochyndorbe next day, to proceed to Tarnawa; so calling Maurice de Grey and Mortimer Sang, and intimating his intention to both of them, he dismissed them for the night, and retired to his repose.

A little past midnight, however, he was suddenly awakened by the page, who came rushing into his apartment in a state of intense apprehension, and sunk into a chair, overcome by his terrors.

"Holy St Baldrid," exclaimed Sir Patrick, "what hath befallen thee, Maurice? and of what art thou afraid? Speak, I beseech thee, and tell me the cause of this strange alarm?"

"Oh, Sir Knight," cried the boy, pale as ashes and ready to faint, "the friar—the monk—the Franciscan! I was telling my beads by my lamp, as is my custom, being about to undress to go to bed, when one of the doors of

my chamber opened slowly, and the figure of the Franciscan stood before me. My blood ran cold when I saw him, for methought murder was in his eye, and I fancied I saw the hilt of a poniard glittering from his bosom. I waited not to hear him speak, but snatching up my lamp, rushed through the farther door-way, and fled hither for succour."

"Pshaw, Maurice," said Sir Patrick, "verily thou must have dreamt that thou didst see the friar. How could'st thou see him, who was plunged by order of the stern Earl into the deep dungeon called the Water-Pit-Vault?"

"Nay, Sir Knight," cried Maurice, "but he may have 'scaped thence, and may be now wandering about the Castle."

"Nay, verily, that were impossible," replied Sir Patrick; "'tis a terrible place; I had the curiosity to peep into it, one of the times it happened to be open, as I passed by the mouth of it. It is so much below the level of the lake, that there is generally an ell's-depth of water in the bottom of it; and its profundity is such, that without ropes, or a ladder, it were vain to hope to emerge from it, even were the heavy stone trap-door that shuts it left open to facilitate escape: nay, I tell thee it is impossible, boy; believe me, the Franciscan stands freezing

there, God help him, among the cold water, for the wretch cannot lie down without drowning. When I think of the horrors the miserable man was so hastily doomed to, I cannot help regretting that I did not make some attempt to soothe the Earl to mercy, though I have strong reason to fear I might have brought a worse fate on his head by my interference; but I shall surely use my endeavours to move my Lord of Buchan for the poor friar's liberation in the morning. Trust me, boy, it could in no wise be the Franciscan thou sawest; and by much the most likely explanation of thine alarm is, that thou hadst become drowsy over thy beads, and, dropping asleep, didst dream of the scene thou sawest pass in the banquet-hall."

"Nay, nay, Sir Knight," cried Maurice de Grey, "it was the Franciscan, flesh and blood, or"—said he, pausing and shuddering, "or—it was his sprite."

"Tush, boy Maurice," said Sir Patrick; "in very truth, 'tis thy dreams which have deceived thee; and, now I think of it, by St Baldrid, I wonder not that thou should'st have dreamed of the friar, seeing that he looked at thee so earnestly; and then he seemed to know thee too. Pr'ythee, hast thou ever chanced to see him before?"

"Not, as far as I can remember, Sir Knight," replied the boy; "but sure I am I shall not fail to recollect him if I should ever see him again, which the blessed Virgin forbid, for there is something terrible in his eye."

"Tut, boy," cried Hepborne, "what hast thou to fear from his eye? Methinks thou hast displayed a wonderous want of courage with this same peaceful friar."

"Peaceful!" exclaimed Maurice de Grey.

"Ay, peaceful," continued his master; "for a poor Franciscan friar cannot well be aught else than peaceful. Thou hast played but a poor part to run away from him, thou who didst attack the bison bull so boldly; yea, thou who didst so nobly wage desperate strife with the assassin who did attempt the life of thy master, at the Shelter-Stone of Loch Aven. Why didst thou not draw thy sword, and demand the cause of his rude intrusion?"

"Nay, Sir Knight," said the boy, shuddering, "he did verily appear something more than human."

"Well, well," said Hepborne, laughing, "I will but throw a cloak about me, and go with thee to thy chamber, to see whether he may yet tarry there."

But when they went to the page's apartment

they found not the slightest vestige of the friar; and Sir Patrick, with the wish of convincing the boy that he had been dreaming, laughed heartily at his fears: But the youth resolutely maintained his assertion that he had not slept; and his master, seeing that the vision, or whatever else it might have been, had taken so strong a hold of the page's mind, that it would be absolute cruelty to compel him to sleep alone, admitted him into a small closet adjoining the apartment he himself occupied; and the boy's countenance showed that he was sufficiently grateful for the boon.

When Sir Patrick Hepborne met the Earl of Buchan at breakfast, he announced to him his determination to depart that day.

"Ha!" said the Wolfe, "by the mass, but it doleth me much that thou art going, Sir Patrick. Thou hast as yet had but small enjoyment in hunting, yea, or in anything else at Lochyndorbe. Thy visit hath been one continued turmoil. Since thou wilt go, however, by'r Lady, I will e'en resolve me to go with thee to this same tournay at Tarnawa. But I must think how to bestow the corby Franciscan friar ere I go; he cannot be left in the Water-Pit-Vault until I return hither, for one night of that moist lodging hath been enow to set many a one

ere this to eternal sleep. I must look him out some drier, though equally secure place of dortoure."

"If I might not offend thee by the request," said Hepborne, "I would ask, as the last favour thou mayest grant me ere I go, and as it were to put the crown upon the hospitality thou hast exercised towards me, that thou would'st give the poor wretch his freedom. Meseems it thou hast done enough to terrify him, yea, and those also who sent him; and the return of the ambassador with proper proposals of peace, may do more than all his sufferings, or even his death. Forgive these gratuitous advices, my Lord Earl, given in the spirit of peace and prudence, and with the best intention."

Hepborne's firmness, courage, and temper, had in reality gained a wonderful ascendancy over the ferocious Wolfe during the short space he had been with him; besides, he always managed to take the most favourable time for making his rational appeals. The Earl heard him to an end most patiently, and then pausing for a moment in thought,—

"Well," said he, "Sir Patrick Hepborne, by the Rood, but there is something right pleasing in seeing thee always enlist thyself on the side of mercy—thou who so well knowest how

to stand a bicker when it comes, and who refuseth never to place thyself in the breach when of needscost thou must. Well, we shall see, then; come along with me to the Water-Pit-Vault, and we shall see what I can make of the hooded crow. He may be more tame by this time, and peraunter he will croak less. Come along with me, I say, so please thee. Here, call the jailor on duty—call him to the Water-Pit-Vault."

A lackey ran to obey his commands, and Sir Patrick descended with him to the outer court-yard. They found the grim and gruff jailor standing ready to raise the stone at his lord's command. The vault was entirely under ground, the mouth of it being immediately within the outer rampart, and opposite to that part of the surrounding lake which was deepest.

"Raise the stone trap-door, knave," cried the Wolfe to the man; "we need not send for a ladder or ropes until we see how the prisoner behaves."

The trap-door was lifted up with considerable difficulty by the sturdy jailor, and all three cast their eyes downwards into the obscure depth below. It was some moments ere their sight

was sufficiently accommodated to the paucity of light to enable them to see to the bottom.

"Ha! what!" cried the Wolfe, "by the beard of my grandfather, but I see him not; dost thou, Sir Patrick? Nay, by St Andrew, there is no Franciscan there, alive or dead; for now I can see even to the bottom of the ell-depth of clear water that covereth the pavement. Hey! what! by'r Lady, but it is passing strange. —Knave," cried he, turning to the jailor, who appeared to be as much confounded as the Earl and his guest, "didst thou see him lodged here yesternight with thine own eyes?"

"I did put him down myself with a rope, so please thee, my noble lord," said the man. The rest were called, and they all declared they had assisted in lowering him, and in replacing the stone over the mouth of the vault, and all were equally petrified to see that the prisoner was gone.

"By all the powers of Tartarus," cried the Wolfe, "but this passeth all marvel. Of a truth, the devil himself must have assisted the carrion corby; and, by my beard, but I did suspect that he was more the servant of hell than of heaven, as he dared to call himself. Ha! well, if the wizard caitiff do fall into my hands again, by all the fiends, but he shall be tried

with fire next, sith he can so readily escape from water."

Sir Patrick was not less astonished than the rest of those who beheld the miracle. He thought of the strange and unaccountable appearance of the Franciscan to the page, which he now readily believed to have been real, and he shuddered at the narrow escape which the boy had made from murder.

The news of the friar having vanished from the Water-Pit-Vault soon spread like wildfire through the Castle, and many and various were the opinions concerning it. Some few there were, who secretly in their own minds set it down as a miraculous deliverance worked in favour of the Franciscan, to defeat the impiety and sacrilege of the Wolfe of Badenoch, who had dared to order violent hands to be laid on a holy man: but the greater part, who were of the same stamp with their master, thought as he did; and some of them even went so far as firmly to believe that the Franciscan was in reality no monk, but the devil himself, disguised under the sanctified garb of a friar. The boldness he had displayed, and the sudden and irresistible halt he had made, in defiance of the power of the sturdy knaves who were dragging him away, confirmed them in their notions.

Nay, many of them even declared, that at that moment they had actually observed his cloven feet, pointed from under the long habit, and thrust like iron prongs into the flag-stones of the banqueting-hall.

CHAPTER VII.

The Wolfe of Badenoch having once made up his mind to accompany Sir Patrick Hepborne to the tournament of St John's, allowed but little time to be lost by his people in preparations; and his sons and their attendants, with his own splendid retinue, were speedily assembled on the lawn beyond the land-sconce. Hepborne's more moderate cortège was also quickly mustered there, and in less than an hour the two leaders were at the head of their united trains, marching off with bugles sounding, and banners and pennons flying.

Leaving the lake by the same route by which Sir Patrick had approached it, they travelled northwards through the apparently ceaseless forest, that varied only in the undulations of the surface it grew upon, and in the trees it produced. The pines were very soon, in a great measure, exchanged for magnificent birches and oaks, spreading themselves far and wide over the country, and forming the vast forest of Drum-

myn. There they skirted the Findhorn, which thundered through the romantic chasm, yawning between confined and precipitous crags, until they found themselves on the summit of a bold cliff overhanging the river, from the base of which it swept in one grand and broad line through the centre of a beautiful plain of about a mile in diameter, dividing it from south to north into two nearly equal parts. These were the Meads of St John, and there the stream seemed gladly to rest in a comparatively gentle current, after its boisterous and laborious passage downwards from its native mountains. Ledges of rock did indeed push themselves here and there from its enamelled margins, and served to diversify them, as did those groups of wide-spreading oaks of enormous growth, forming in most places a broad bowery fringe to either shore; but there was nothing to disturb the perfect continuity and level of the grassy surface of the meadows, except one or two bosky groves, carelessly planted by the hand of nature. The high banks retreating on both sides, to bend round and embrace the Meads, presented an irregularity of form and slope; while the forest, extending itself everywhere over the upper grounds, sent down some of its most magnificent representatives to grace their sides.

About a mile or more to the left, perched on a gentle eminence, arose the venerable Castle of Tarnawa, looking far and wide over its woody domain. Towards the northern extremity of the Eastern Mead, stood the little chapel dedicated to St John the Baptist, giving name to the lovely valley that now stretched in rich verdure beneath their eyes; and over the farther boundaries of the meadows appeared the fertile plain of Forres, the broad expanse of the Frith, and the distant mountain range beyond.

But these, the mere ordinary and permanent features of the scene, though exquisitely beautiful in themselves, were at this time rendered tenfold more interesting by the animation that everywhere pervaded the Meads of St John, where the whole population of the north had assembled. Midway down the long stretch of the river was erected a wide bridge, formed of enormous pillars and beams of wood, intended to give temporary passage between the opposite banks during the ensuing sports; and it was spanned above by several triumphal arches, which people were then employed in decorating with boughs of holly and other evergreens. A promiscuous and motley assemblage of booths, tents, log-houses, and huts, in number beyond all possibility of reckoning, were seen scattered

like a great irregular village all around the base of those semicircular banks embracing the eastern side of the Meads. These fragile tenements were occupied by the populace not only of the neighbouring town and surrounding country, but by many who had come from very distant parts of Scotland, some to establish a mart for their wares, others to exhibit feats of strength, or agility, or juggling, and the greater number, perhaps, to behold the spectacle, or assist in the labours incident to the preparation of it.

The lists were then erecting in the centre of the eastern meadow, while, on the western side of the river, were observed a number of pavilions, within the recess of a beautiful glade retiring among the wooded banks. These were brought thither by knights who came to attend the tournament, the accommodations in the Castle being quite unequal for more than a chosen few. Such as were already erected had each a banner or pennon flying before it, and others were pitching with great expedition. In the midst of the whole was the pavilion of the Earl of Moray, of much greater magnitude than any of those around it, while his banner unfurled itself to the breeze from the top of a tall pine fixed in the ground for the purpose.

Such were the most prominent objects, then, in the Meads of St John ; but the whole vale swarmed with living beings. Groups of men and horses were seen moving over it in all directions, and the very earth seemed in motion.

" By the holy Rood," cried the Wolfe, " but it is a noble sight. Methinks, my brother-in-law, Earl John, must have had his hands in the King's purse ere he could have ventured on such a show as this. Come, Sir Patrick, let us hasten to see how things may be in the Castle."

They followed a steep and winding path that led them down through the wood into the valley below, and quickly crossed the level ground towards the bridge. This they found guarded by a strong party of spearmen and archers. The captain on duty came forward—

" Sirs Knights," said he courteously, " so please ye to honour me with your names and titles, that they may be passed forward to the Earl's pavilion for his inspection."

" Morte de ma vie," cried the Wolfe of Badenoch pettishly, " but this is ceremony with a vengeance. What! shall I not have liberty to approach me to mine own brother-in-law, until I shall have sent him my name? and am I, or is my horse, to be kept on the fret here, until

the return of a tardy messenger from yonder tents? What a fiend, dost thou not know me, Sir Captain? dost not know me for the Earl of Buchan?"

"My Lord Earl," replied the captain of the guard with perfect reverence, "I did indeed know thee attence, but mine orders are so imperative, that albeit it doth indeed much erke me to be so strict with thee, yet must I of needscost subject thee to the same rule that hath been laid down for all."

To prevent farther words, Hepborne hastened to give his name and quality, and the number of his retinue, to the captain of the guard; and observing the growing impatience of the Wolfe, he managed to avert his coming wrath, by expressing a desire to ride towards the lists, to see what was going forward there, hoping that, by the time they had examined all the operations in progress, the passage of the bridge would be open to them.

Having contrived to make the Wolfe waste nearly half an hour in this way, Hepborne returned with him to the bridge, where they were informed by the captain of the guard, that the Earl of Moray was coming in person to meet them; and accordingly they beheld him riding

across the bridge towards them, followed by an esquire and a very few attendants. He was unostentatiously dressed in a light hunting garb; his figure was middle-sized, his complexion fair, and his countenance fresh, round, and of a mild expression.

His horse's hooves had no sooner touched the sod of the meadow than he dismounted, and giving the rein to his esquire, advanced to meet his brother-in-law. The Wolfe of Badenoch leaped from his saddle, and moving one step forward, stood to receive him. Sir Patrick Hepborne and the five Stewarts having also dismounted, were at his back.

"Brother," said the Wolfe, after their first salutations were over, "this is Sir Patrick Hepborne."

"Sir Patrick," said the Earl graciously, "I rejoice to see thee here; welcome to thy country, and to these my domains; I regret to understand that I must cast away all hope of seeing thine honoured father upon this occasion, and I yet more grieve at the cause of his present unfitness for mixing in sports in which he was wont to shine as a bright star. Nevoys," continued he, saluting Sir Alexander Stewart and his brothers, "I rejoice to behold ye thus waxing so stout; an ye thrive thus, even

the very youngest of ye will soon be well able to bear a shock. What sayest thou, Duncan, my boy?—Your pardon, Sir Patrick, for a moment, but I must speak a little aside here with my brother, the noble Earl of Buchan; I shall be entirely at thy command anon."

The two Earls retired a few paces to one side, and Moray's face assuming an air of great seriousness, he began to talk in an under tone to the Wolfe of Badenoch, whose brow, as he listened, gathered clouds and storms, which went on blackening and ruffling it, until at length he burst out into one of his ungovernable furies.

"Ha! by the beard of my grandfather, and dost thou think that I care the value of a crossbow bolt for the split-crowned magpie?" cried he. "Excommunicate me! and what harm, I pr'ythee, will his excommunication do me? But, by'r Lady, he shall suffer for it. He has already had a small spice of what the Wolfe of Badenoch can do when he is roused, and, by all the fiends, he shall know more on't ere long."

"Talk not so loud and vehemently, I beseech thee, brother," said the Earl of Moray; "publish not the matter thus."

"Nay, but I will tell it," roared out the Wolfe; "I will publish the insolence of this scoundrel Bishop to the whole world. What

think ye," continued he, turning round to his sons and Sir Patrick—" what think ye of the consummate impudence of the rascally Alexander Barr? He hath dared to void his impotent curse on the Earl of Buchan and Ross—on the son of the King of Scotland—on the Wolfe of Badenoch. My brother here, the Earl of Moray, hath just had an especial messenger from the croaking carrion, to tell him the news of my excommunication; but the red fiend catch me, an I do not make him rue that he ever told the tale beyond his own crowing rookery. Ha! let us to the Castle, brother—let us to my sister Margery, I say. Depardieux, but thou shalt see that the hypocritical knave's anathema shall be but as seasoning to my food. Trust me, I shall not eat or drink one tithe the less of thy good cheer for it."

" Most noble Earl of Buchan, and my most excellent brother," said the Earl of Moray, with a hesitating and perplexed air, " it erketh me sore—it giveth me, as thou mayest readily believe, extreme grief, to be compelled to tell thee that I cannot with propriety receive thee at present among the nobles who now house them within my walls, nor would the heralds admit of thy presence at the ensuing tournament, whilst thou liggest under the bann of the Holy

Church, even were I bold enough to risk for thee the Church's displeasure against me and mine. Let me, then, I pray thee, have weight with thee so far, as to persuade thee to ride straightway to Elgin, to make thy peace with the Bishop. Much as I have on my hands at the present time, verily I will not scruple to haste thither with thee, if thou dost think that I mought in any manner ot way further an accommodation, so that this dread reproach may be forthwith removed from off thee. We can then return together speedily, ere yet the matter shall have been bruited abroad (for, so far as I am concerned, it is as yet a secret); and thou shalt then, much to my joy and honour, take thy due and proper place by the side of thy brother, Robert Earl of Fife and Menteith, at the head of mine illustrious guests, and——"

"Ha! what!" cried the Wolfe of Badenoch in a fury; "thinkest thou that I will hie me straight, to lout myself low, and to lick the dust before the feet of that lorrel Bishop, who hath had the surquedrie to dare thus to insult me? By my trusty burly-brand, but I shall take other means of settling accounts between us. But methinks he is right hasty in his traffic. No sooner have I settled one score with him, than he runs me up another in the twinkling of

an eye. But, by all the furies, he shall find that I shall pay him off roundly, and score him up double on my side. And so, brother, thou dost think that I carry such leperous contamination about my person, as may altogether unfit me for the purity of thy virtuous house? Gramercy for thy courtesy. But, by the Rood, I do believe that something else lurketh under all these pretences. Thou hast seen my dotard father the King lately; thou hast held council with him, I ween, and, I trow, my interests have not been furthered by the advices thou hast whispered in the Royal ear. I still lack the best cantle of my Lieutenantship in lacking Moray-land, and a bird hath whistled me, that John Dunbar, Earl of Moray, hath not been backward in urging the Monarch to refuse it to me. If this be so, brother Earl——"

"I swear by my knighthood," cried the Earl of Moray, earnestly interrupting him, and speaking at once with calmness and firmness—"I swear by my knighthood, that whoso hath told thee this, hath told thee a black falsehood; and I gage mine honour to throw the lie in his teeth, and to defy him to mortal debate, should it so please thee to yield me his name."

"Well spoken, brother John," cried the Wolfe, apparently satisfied with the solemnity

of the Earl of Moray's denial. "But thou art pretty safe in thy darreigne; I did but suspect thee, and, in sooth, appearances were infernally against thee. But I must take it upon thy word and abide the event. Yet do I know of a truth that thou wert with the King——"

"That do I most readily confess," replied the Earl of Moray mildly. "I did indeed journey to Scone on my private affairs, and, among other things, to crave his Majesty's gracious permission to hold this same tournay, and to petition for his Royal presence here. But state reasons, or infirmity, or perhaps both causes conjoined, keep him back from us; nathless, he hath sent his banner hither to wave over the lists, to show that at least we have his Royal good-will with us. I most solemnly vow, that I did never meddle nor make with the King in any matter of thine."

"The red fiend ride me then," cried the Wolfe hastily, "but thy reception of me hath been something of the coolest. Methinks that, putting myself in thy case, and thee in mine, I should for thee have defied all the lorrel coistrels that ever carried crosier. Ha! by'r Lady, 'tis indeed a precious tale to tell, that the Earl of Buchan was refused herborrow within the Castle of his brother of Moray."

"Again I repeat that it doleth me sore," said the Earl of Moray, "that I should be compelled to put on the semblance of inhospitality, and, above all, towards thee, my Lord of Buchan, with whom I am so nearly and dearly allied. But in this case, were I even to set the Bishop's threats at defiance, in order to receive thee, thou must be aware that it would only be to expose thee to certain disgrace; for, of a truth, thy presence would quickly clear my hall of all the noble guests who are to feast within its walls. Would, then, that I could incline thee to follow my counsel, and that thou would'st be content to ride with me to Elgin, to appease the Bishop's wrath, that he may remove his Episcopal curse. We should be back here long ere cock-crow, and——"

"Thou hast had my mind on that head already, brother John," cried the Wolfe, interrupting him, in a rage. "By the mass, but it is a cheap thing for thee to make trade and chevisance of another's pride; but, by the blood of the Bruce, I promise thee, I shall give up no tittle of mine to swell that of the lossel drone of a Bishop; so make thyself easy on that score. What! to be trampled on by a walthsome massmonger, and then to go cap-in-hand, that he may put his plebeian foot on my neck! My horse

there—my horse, I say. What stand the knaves staring for? I bid thee goode'en, my Lord of Moray. I'll to Forres then, to inn me, sith I may not put my leperous hide within thy pure and unsullied walls. God be with thee, Sir Patrick Hepborne;" and so saying, he sprang into his saddle.

"But," said the Earl of Moray, "though I cannot receive thee at present, my Lord of Buchan, I shall be right glad to do all the honour I may to Sir Alexander Stewart and the rest of my nevoys."

"Gramercy for thy courtesy," cried the proud and fierce Sir Alexander; "sith thou dost hold my father as a polluted and pestilential guest, thou shalt have none of my company, I promise thee."

"Ha! well said, son Alexander," shouted the Wolfe joyously; "well said, my brave boy; by my beard, but thou hast spoken bravely. To Forres then, my merry men."

And without abiding farther parlance, the hasty Wolfe of Badenoch, with Sir Alexander and the younger Stewarts, rode off at a hand-gallop, followed by their retinue. Sir Andrew, however, remained quietly behind, and manifested no inclination to accompany his father.

"And now, Sir Patrick Hepborne," said the Earl of Moray, "I have to crave thy pardon for having been thus so long neglectful of thee on a first meeting; but, I trow, I need hardly apologize, since thou hast thyself seen enow, I ween, to plead my excuse with thee. This matter hath in very sooth most grievously affected me. It hath truly given me more teene and vexation than I can well tell thee. But I shall to Forres by times i' the morning, and then essay to soothe my Lord of Buchan into greater moderation and a more reasonable temper than he hath just displayed. Meanwhile, the Countess Margery doth abide for us in the pavilion. Let us then hasten thither, so please thee, for she will not leave it to go to the Castle until I rejoin her, and verily it waxeth late, and the nobles and barons will ere this be assembling in Randolph's Hall."

The Earl now led the way across the bridge, and thence towards the pavilions. As they approached the great one, before which his banner was displayed, a group of squires, grooms, and caparisoned palfreys appeared promenading in front of it.

"Yea, I see that her palfrey is ready," said the Earl; "nay, yonder she issues forth to meet us."

He dismounted, and Hepborne following his example, was straightway introduced by him to the Countess, who received him with great kindness and courtesy.

"Nevoy," said she to Sir Andrew Stewart, who approached to salute her, "I do most sincerely grieve at the cause of my brother the Earl of Buchan's absence. I hope, however, it will be but short, sith I trust the holy Bishop Barr will not be inexorable, and that thy father will join our festivities ere long. But where are thy brethren?"

"We shall talk of that anon," said the Earl, wishing to get rid of an unpleasant subject; "meanwhile let us not lose time, for it waxeth late, and our presence at the Castle is doubtless looked for ere now. Get thee to horse, then, my sweet lady spouse, with what haste thou mayest."

Hepborne advanced and gave his arm to the Countess, and having assisted her into her saddle, the whole party mounted to accompany her to Tarnawa. During their short ride through the forest, Hepborne enjoyed enough of the conversation of the Earl and Countess to give him a very favourable impression of both. The lady, in particular, showed so much sweetness of disposition, that he could not help contrast-

ing her in his own mind with her brother, the savage and ferocious Wolfe, to make up whose fiery and intemperate character to its full strength Nature seemed to have robbed her soft and peaceful soul of every spark of violence, that might have otherwise fallen to its share in the original mixture of its elements. Sound reason and good sense, indeed, seemed in her to be united with a most winning kindness and sweetness of manner, and it was quite a refreshment to Sir Patrick to meet with society so tranquil and rational, after that of the ever-raging and tempestuous spirits with whom he had been lately consorting. The Countess failed not to notice the handsome page, Maurice de Grey; but her attentions to him were of a very different description from those of the Lady Mariota Athyn, which had so afflicted him at Lochyndorbe. She spoke to him with gentleness, and having been made aware of his family and history by Hepborne, manifested the interest she took in the boy in a manner so delicate, that he was already disposed to cling to her as willingly as he had before wished to avoid the Lady Mariota.

As they approached the straggling hamlet, through which lay the immediate approach to the Castle, its inhabitants, as well as the pea-

sants from the neighbouring cottages, were collected together. Men, women, and children, came crowding about them for the mere pleasure of beholding the Earl and his Countess, and the grateful hearts of these poor creatures burst forth in showers of blessings on the heads of their benefactors.

"God bless the noble pair!"—"There they come, God bless them!"—"May the blessing of St Andrew—may the holy Virgin's choicest blessings be about them!"—"What should we poor folk do an 'twere na for them?"—"What should we do if anything should come over them?"—"Heaven preserve their precious lives!"—"May Heaven long spare them to be a comfort and a defence to us all!"—"God bless the noble Earl, and Heaven's richest blessings be showered on the angel Countess!"

Such was the abundant and gratifying reward these noble and generous hearts received, for well fulfilling the duties of the high station their lot had placed them in. They replied graciously to these simple but sincere benisons, and though in haste, the Countess more than once reined up her palfrey, as she passed along the lane they opened for her, to make inquiries after the complaints, distresses, and wants of particular individuals; and where the matter ad-

mitted of her relief, she failed not to give an order to attend at the Castle at her daily hour of audience.

CHAPTER VIII.

The party now climbed the slope, on the summit of which the Castle rose grandly before them; and they were no sooner within its outer defences, than they found every corner of it alive. Lacqueys and serving-men of all sorts, in all the variety of rich attire, were seen running about in every direction. Most of the noblemen and knights had already assembled to prepare for the tournament, and some of these, with their ladies and daughters, were inmates of the Castle. From the Earl of Moray's particular regard and friendship for Sir Patrick Hepborne the elder, an apartment was immediately assigned to his son; yet those who were favoured with lodging at Tarnawa were but few in number, compared with the many who were to be accommodated in the pavilions erected on the margin of the mead. But as all were expected to assemble at the daily feast at the Castle, tables were laid for

more than an hundred guests in Randolph's Hall, where even a company of twice the number might have found ample room, this grand monument of feudal times covering an area of nearly an hundred feet in length.

A squire usher promptly attended to show Sir Patrick to his chamber, where he unarmed, dressed, and perfumed himself; and when he had completed his attirement the squire usher again appeared to conduct him to the great hall.

"Nobles and Chevaliers," cried a poursuivant stationed at the entrance; "nobles and chevaliers, place there for Sir Patrick Hepborne, younger of Hailes, a puissant knight, of good stock and brave lineage, who but the other day overthrew the renowned Sir Rafe Piersie in single combat, which was nothing to his deeds of arms in France."

"Good poursuivant," said Hepborne, interrupting him, in an under voice, as he poured a liberal largess into his cap, "thou hast said enow—no more, I beseech thee." But the poursuivant's tongue was rather oiled than gagged by the unusual magnitude of his donation.

"Ay," cried he aloud, "a brave tree is known by its good fruits, and gentle blood by its generosity. Well may ye ken a noble hand by the

gift that comes from it; and well may ye ken a gallant and well-born knight by his noble port and presence, and by his liberal largess. Place there, I say, for Sir Patrick Hepborne—place there for the hero of Rosebarque."

"Silence, I entreat thee," cried Hepborne, advancing, with all eyes upon him, to meet the Earl of Moray, who was approaching to receive him.

The magnificent Hall of Randolph presented at that moment one of the most brilliant spectacles that could well be conceived, graced as it then was with some of the flower of Scotland's chivalry, who, with their ladies and attendants, shone in all the richest and gayest variety of silks, velvets, furs, and gaudy-coloured cloths, blazing with gold and embroidery, sparkling with gems, and heavy with curiously-wrought chains and other ornaments, whilst flaunting plumes fluttered about, giving a multiplied effect of motion; so that the whole area resembled one great tide of gorgeous grandeur, that was perpetually fluctuating, mixing, and changing.

"Sir Patrick," said the Earl to Hepborne, "I believe thy sojournance abroad hath hitherto permitted thee to see but little of our Scottish chivauncie. It will be a pleasing task to me to

make thee acquainted with such of them as are here; and it will give me yet greater jovisaunce to teach them to know thy merits. Let me then, first of all, introduce thee to my brother-in-law, Robert Stewart, Earl of Fife and Menteith, who, though he be but the King's second son, is supposed, with some truth, to have the greater share of the government of Scotland."

So saying, the Earl of Moray led Sir Patrick through the dividing crowd, towards the upper end of the hall, where a platform, raised about a foot above the rest, marked it as the place of honour. There they found a circle of knights surrounding a tall majestic man of commanding presence, whose countenance seemed to wear an expression of amiability, affability, and even of benignity, apparently put on for the occasion, like the ornaments he wore, but by no means forming a part of his character. His face was handsome, and Hepborne could just trace in it a faint likeness to his brother the Wolfe of Badenoch; but there was a lurking severity about the eye, which his gracious looks could not altogether quench. He appeared to be highly courted by all about him, and from the smiles that mantled over the faces he successively looked at, he seemed to carry sunshine on his brow, and to scatter joy wherever he

threw his eyes. Hepborne only caught up the last of his words as he approached the group in the midst of which he stood.

——"And if it should so please my Liege Father," said he to an elderly knight who stood bowing as he spoke,—"if it should so please my Liege Father to throw the heavy burden of government on me, trust me, I shall not forget thy hitherto unrequited services. The debt thy country doth owe thee is indeed great, and thou hast hitherto been met with but small mountance of gratitude. But how enorme soever the debt may be, it shall be faithfully paid thee should I have any control."

"My Lord," said the Earl of Moray, advancing, whilst the circle opened up to make way for him, "this is Sir Patrick Hepborne, whom I promised thee to introduce to thy notice."

"Thanks, my good brother, for this so speedy fulfilment of thy behote," replied the Earl of Fife. "Trust me, it giveth me exceeding joy to have this opportunity of knowing so valiant a knight, the son, too, of so brave and renowned a warrior, and one so sage in council, as the highly and justly respected Sir Patrick Hepborne of Hailes, who, to the great let and hindrance of his country's weal, hath kept himself too much of late from the bustle of state affairs.

But now that thou hast returned to thy native soil, Sir Patrick, we shall hope to see thee bear a part of that fardel, which thy gallant father might have been otherwise called on to support alone; for, if fame lie not, thy prudence bids fair to render thee as serviceable in the closet of council, as thine arm hath already proved itself fit to defend the fame and the rights of Scotland in the field."

"My Lord," said Hepborne, "I fear much that fame hath done me but a left-handed service, by trumpeting forth merits, the which I do but meagrely possess, and that public expectation hath been raised high, only to be the more cast down."

"Nay, trust me, Sir Patrick, there is small fear of that," said the Earl of Moray.

"Fear!" said the Earl of Fife; "I have had mine eyes ever on the branchers of the true breed, from whom Scotland and my father's house must look to have falcons of the boldest and bravest cast; and none hath made promise of fairer flight than thou hast, Sir Patrick. True it is, that thou hast yet to be reclaimed, as the falconer would term it; that is, I would say, thou hast yet to learn what game to fly at. But I shall gladly teach thee, for it will give me real joy to direct the views, and advance the

fortunes, of the son of my worthy old friend Sir Patrick Hepborne."

"My lord," said Sir Patrick, "I am indeed much beholden to thy courtesy——"

"Nay," said the Earl of Fife, interrupting him, "nay, not to me or my courtesy, I promise thee, but to thine own worth only; for if the good old King my father, and my brother John, should force the regency of this kingdom on me, the duty I owe to them and to my country, will never suffer me to give place or office to any but those who are fit and worthy to fill them; so thou hast to thank thyself and thine own good conduct, already so much bruited abroad, for the high opinion I have thus so early formed of thee, as well as for the desire I now feel to foster thy budding honours, and to bring out all thy latent talents for Scotland's behoof."

"I am overwhelmed with your Lordship's goodness," said Hepborne, bowing. "Trust me, mine humble endeavours shall not be wanting to deserve this thy kind and early good opinion, formed, as I am disposed to guess, for my revered father's sake, though thou art pleased to flatter me by assigning another cause."

"However that may be," replied the Earl of Fife, squeezing him warmly by the hand, "thou

mayest rely on me as thy sincere friend, Sir Patrick.—Ho! Sir John de Keith," exclaimed he, suddenly breaking off, and joining a knight who bowed to him as he passed by, "I shall have that matter we talked of arranged for thee anon. The son of my old friend the Knight-Marischal of Scotland, and one for whom I have so high a personal regard, shall always command my most earnest endeavours to gratify his wishes. Walk with me apart, I pray thee. Thou knowest the money hath been——"

But the rest of his discourse was lost in a whisper, and Hepborne's attention was called off by the Earl of Moray, who introduced him to David Stewart, Earl of Stratherne and Caithness, another son of the King's, though by a second wife. After a few expressions of mere compliment had passed between them, and the Earl of Stratherne had moved on—

"Lindsay," cried his noble host to a bold and determined-looking knight, who was elbowing his way through the crowd, with his lady hanging in his left arm, "Lindsay, I wish to make thee acquainted with Sir Patrick Hepborne, son of the gallant Sir Patrick of Hailes.—Sir Patrick, this is my brother-in-law, Sir David de Lindsay of Glenesk; and this is his lady, the Lady Catherine Stewart, sister to my countess.

Sir David is my most trusty and well-approved brother, and it would give me joy to see the bonds of amity drawn tight between thee."

The lady received Sir Patrick's compliments most graciously; a cordial acknowledgment took place between the two knights; and Hepborne felt, that although there was less of protestation, there was a greater smack of sincerity in Lindsay than in the powerful Earl of Fife, who had said and promised so much.

"Welcome to Scotland, Sir Patrick," said he. "By St Andrew, but I rejoice to see thee, for I have heard much of thee. What news, I pray thee, from foreign pa——"

The word was broken off in the middle, for, ere he had time to finish it, to the great astonishment of his lady, and the no small amusement of Hepborne and the Earl, he suddenly struck himself a violent blow on the cheek with the palm of his right hand. A roguish laugh burst from behind him. Lindsay turned quickly round.

"Aha! Dalzell," cried he, "so it was thou, wicked wag that thou art?"

"'Tis indeed Sir William de Dalzell," said Lady de Lindsay, laughing; "he is always at his mad tricks. There now, do but see what he is about; he is actually applying the tip of a long

feather from a peacock's tail to tickle the cheek of my sister Jane's husband, the grave Sir Thomas Hay of Errol."

"How doth he dare to attack the august cheek of the High Constable of Scotland?" said the Earl of Moray, with a smile.

"Nay, do but observe," said Sir David Lindsay, "do but watch, I beseech thee, what strange and uncouth grimaces our brother-in-law the high and mighty Constable is making, as the fibres of the delicate point of the feather titillate the skin of his cheek. Ah! ha, ha, ha! by the mass, but he hath given himself as hard a blow as I did, thinking to kill the fly."

"And see," said the lady, "he hath suspected a trick; but he looks in vain for our waggish friend Dalzell, who hath dived like a duck and disappeared. Ha, ha, ha! see how strangely the High Constable eyes the solemn Earl of Sutherland near him, as if he half believed that grave personage was the perpetrator of the espièglerie. 'Twould be rare sport if he should tax him with it."

"'Twould be a rich treat indeed," said Sir David Lindsay.

"Sir Patrick," said the Earl of Moray, "come hither, I pray thee. Yonder comes James Earl of Douglas and Marr, with his Countess the

Lady Margaret Stewart, another sister of my Margery's."

"He is indeed a knight worth knowing," said Hepborne.

"This way, then, and I will introduce thee to him," said the Earl of Moray.

Hepborne followed his host towards that part of the hall where the bold and herculean Earl of Douglas was making his way with his lady slowly through the assembled company, who crowded eagerly around him to offer him their compliments. His manner was plain and dignified, and he behaved with kindness and affability to all who addressed him, though, on his part, he did not by any means seem to court notice. When Hepborne was brought up to him by his brother-in-law, and his name made known, he gave him a good soldierlike shake by the hand.

"I am right glad to see thee in thine own country, Sir Patrick Hepborne," said he. "An I mistake not, some storm is a-brewing in England, that may cause us to want all the good lances which Scotland can muster. When King Dickon doth send these hawk-eyed ambassadors to talk of peace, depardieux, but I, for my part, am apt to smell war. My Lord of Fife sayeth that 'tis not so, and he is shrewd enough in

common. I have mine own thoughts; but we shall see who is right, and that too ere many days are gone, an the signs of the times deceive me not."

"'Twere well that we young unschooled soldiers should have something to do, my lord," said Hepborne, "were it only to keep our swords from rusting, and lest we should forget our exercises, and such parts of the rudiments of war as chance hath taught us."

"Thou say'st well, my gallant young friend," said the Douglas, his eyes flashing as he spoke, and again shaking Hepborne heartily by the hand; "but thou art no such novice to forget thy trade so easily. Yet say'st thou well; piping times of peace are the ruin of our Scottish chivauncie, and stiffen the movements of even the most experienced warriors. Such sentiments as these, seasoned with so much modesty, are but what I mought have looked for from the son of that knight of sterling proof of heart as well as hand, my brave old friend Sir Patrick Hepborne, thy father."

Sir Patrick was more than gratified by the expressions of respect for his father, which he had heard drop so liberally from every mouth. The blush of honest pride, mingled with that of warm filial affection, arose more than once

to his cheek; but it never before mounted with such a rushing tide of joy, as it did when this short panegyric fell from the lips of the heroic Douglas. He was not permitted time to reply, for all were so eager to have one word, nay, one glance of recognition, from the brave Earl, that his attention was rifled from Hepborne, and he was carried away before he could open his mouth to speak to him again.

"Dost thou see yonder group?" demanded the Earl of Moray, as he pointed them out to Sir Patrick. "The elderly knight and dame are William de Vaux, Lord of Dirleton, and his lady. The fair damosel seated behind them is their daughter, the Lady Jane de Vaux, held to be the loveliest of all the maidens who have come to honour this our tournament. Nay, she is indeed esteemed one of the fairest pearls of the Scottish court, and a rich pearl she is, moreover, seeing she is the heiress of her father's domains. The knight who lieth at her footstool, and sigheth enlangoured at her feet, effunding soft speeches from his heart, and gazing upwards with a species of adoration in his eyes, is the gallant Sir John Halyburton, who wears her favours, and bears her proud merits in high defiance on his lance's point."

"Let me entreat your lordship, who are

those knights who come yonder so bravely arrayed?" said Hepborne.

"Those," replied the Earl, "are the English knights who lately came on ambassage. He in the purple velvet is the Lord Welles; that elder knight on his right hand, who showeth deportment so courteous, is the worthy Sir John Constable of Halsham and Burton, one who hath done good deeds of arms in his day; he that is so flauntingly attired in the peach-blossom surcoat so richly emblazoned, is the gay Sir Piers Courtenay; and immediately behind him is the stark Sir Thomas Fairfax of Walton. But stay, here comes my brother George, Earl of Dunbar and March.—George," cried he, addressing his brother as he passed, "this is Sir Patrick Hepborne, whose father thou well knowest."

"I do," said the Earl of Dunbar, energetically squeezing Hepborne's hand, "and I shall not fail to receive the son of my dearest friend into my warmest affections for his father's sake. How left ye thy gallant sire?"

This question was but the preliminary to a long and friendly conversation between Hepborne and the Earl of Dunbar, which lasted until it was interrupted by a flourish of trumpets and clarions, announcing the entrance of the grand sewer, with a white wand in his hand.

He advanced at the head of a perfect army of lackeys, who brought in the feast, and the company began to be marshalled to their places by the pursuivants.

CHAPTER IX.

The banquet given daily by the noble Earl of Moray, was in every respect befitting the rank and splendour of the company assembled to partake of it. On the raised platform, at the upper end of the hall of Randolph, a table was placed transversely, to which was attached, at right angles, a limb that stretched down the greater part of the length of the pavement. One side only of the upper, or cross table, was occupied; and opposite to the centre of it were seated the Earl and Countess of Moray, in full view of all their guests. With them sat the Earl of Fife, and all those who could boast of royal blood or alliance; whilst both sides of the long table were filled up by the rest of the nobles, and knights, and ladies, who were marshalled according to their respective rank. The shield of each chevalier, with his coat armour emblazoned on it, was hung on a hook on the

wall, opposite to the place occupied by him at table; so that all might be known by their bearings.

Hepborne having been introduced to the party of William de Vaux, Lord of Dirleton, led off his lady to the festive board.

"Sir Patrick Hepborne," said the old knight to him, soon after they had taken their places, "perhaps thou art aware that thine excellent father and I were early friends? yea, well did I know thee, too, when thou wert as yet but an unfledged falcon. Full often, perdie, hast thou sat on these knees of mine, and many a hair, too, hast thou plucked in frolic from this grizzled beard, the which was then, I'll warrant thee, as black as the raven's back. Thou knowest that my domains of Dirleton, and those of Hailes, stand within a fair degree of neighbourhood. Give me leave, then, to drink this cup of malvoisie to the better acquaintance of friends so old."

"I have often heard my father give utterance to many a kind and warm remembrance of thy friendship for our house," replied Sir Patrick, as he prepared to return the Lord of Dirleton's pledge; "and it giveth me extreme joy, thus unexpectedly to meet with one who deigned to bestow notice upon my childhood,

albeit I cannot recall the recollection of the countenance of him who vouchsafed it."

"Nay, thy memory was too young at the time, Sir Patrick, to have received permanent impressions of any kind," replied the Lord of Dirleton; "and as we were soon afterwards driven abroad by domestic affliction, thou never hadst any opportunity of seeing me after thou couldst observe and remember; for when we returned to Scotland again, we discovered that thou hadst gone to the very country we had left."

"I did hear of thy name from those who considered themselves highly honoured by having enjoyed thy society during the time thou didst make Paris thy residence," said Hepborne.

"Yea, we know many there," replied the Lord of Dirleton, "many who were worthy and amiable; yet none, I trust, who could dislodge the early and fixed Scottish friendships we had formed. That between thy father and me was so strong in its nature, that we longed to cement our families irrevocably together; and I do well remember me, that, when thou wert but some two or three years old, and the Lady Dirleton had produced her first child, a daughter, Sir Patrick and I did solemnly vow, that, with the blessing and concurrence of Heaven,

thou and she should knit us more closely together by thy union, so soon as years should have ripened ye severally into man and woman."

"Alas," interrupted the Lady Dirleton, the tears swelling in her eyes as she spoke—"alas, it did not please Heaven to give its blessing or its concurrence to our vows, or to lend its ear to our many prayers and supplications for the fulfilment of our wishes. A cruel fate deprived us of our infant daughter, and made me a wretchedly bereft and grief-bywoxen mother. When I saw thee——"

"Leave off this sad theme, I do beseech thee, Maria," said the old knight, interrupting her, with eyes that streamed over as fast as her own; "'tis but unmeet talk, I wis, for a festive scene like this. At some other and more fitting time, Sir Patrick may be disposed to list the story, and to sympathize with our dole and dreriment."

By this time the more substantial part of the banquet had been removed, a profusion of lights had changed the dim twilight of the place into more than day, and health and brimming goblets of wine were circulating. Each knight was called upon to quaff a pledge to the bright eyes that held him in thrall; and this public avowal of his tender attachment, was consider-

ed as a sort of prelude to the more determined appeal he might be afterwards disposed to make in support of her beauty and fame, at the point of his lance in the lists. Some there were who, when it came to their turn, bowed silently, and permitted the cup to pass by them: these, however, were few in number, and were such as, from some private reason, wished to throw a veil of delicacy over their attachment; but when Sir John Halyburton was called on, he arose from the side of the blushing Jane de Vaux, and boldly proclaimed his love and adoration of her to all present.

"I pledge this brimming mazer to the health of the peerless Lady Jane de Vaux," said he; "and as I now drink the cup dry for her sake, so am I prepared to drain my life's blood in her service."

A murmur of approbation ran around the festal board. When it had subsided—

"Sir Patrick Hepborne," said the Earl of Moray, "wilt thou vouchsafe to honour us with a cup to the fair enslaver of thine affections?"

Sir Patrick arose, and putting his right hand over his heart, bowed gracefully, and then seated himself in silence. In the former instances, where knights had declined to speak, the Earl of Moray had passed them by without farther

notice, but he was himself so disappointed, and perceived disappointment so legibly written on the faces of the company after Hepborne's silent bow, that he could not resist addressing him again.

"What, Sir Patrick," said he, "hast thou then no lady-love, for the sake of whose bright eyes we may hope to see thee bestirring thyself sturdily in the lists?"

"My Lord Earl," replied Hepborne, rising modestly, "it will give me joy to break a few spears, out of mere courtesy, with any knights who may esteem mine arm worthy of being opposed to theirs."

The Earl saw it would be indelicate to press him further, and went on to the conclusion of his circle of healths. The choir of minstrels, who had already occupied the music gallery, had begun to make the antique Hall of Randolph resound with their pealing preludes, when their harmony was interrupted by a clamouring noise of voices from without; and immediately a crowd of squires and domestics of all kinds came rushing into the hall, exclaiming, "Fire, my Lord Earl of Moray, fire!"

"Where—where—where is the fire?" burst from every mouth; and the ladies shrieked, and

many of them even fainted, at the very mention of the word.

"The town of Forres is blazing," cried half a dozen voices at once.

The utmost confusion instantly arose amidst the assemblage of nobles, knights, and ladies. Out rushed the Earl of Moray, and out rushed such of his guests as had no lady to detain them within. Hepborne, for his part, happened, by accident more than anything else, to follow his host up a staircase that led to the battlements, which in day-light commanded a view over the whole surrounding country; but the landscape was now buried in darkness, save where a lurid blaze arose at three or four miles' distance in the direction of the eastern horizon, through which appeared some of the black skeletons of the consuming tenements of Forres,—or where the broad and full estuary of the river reflected the gleam which cast its illumination even over the houses of the sea-port on the distant point, and the wide ocean beyond it. Far off, shouts and yells arose from different quarters of the circumjacent forest, as if from people who were collecting, and hastening in dismay towards the scene of the conflagration.

"Holy Virgin defend us! what can have caused so sudden and unlooked-for a calamity?"

cried the Earl of Moray, in a tone of extreme distress.

"Meseems it can hardly be the result of accident," replied Hepborne, "for the fire doth blaze in divers parts at once. Can it have been the work of some enemy?"

"Enemy!" cried the Earl, "what enemy can there be here? And yet it may have been done by some marauding band of plundering peelers. Yet that seems impossible—it cannot be. But let me not waste time here, when I can ride to the spot. Ho, there, in the courtyard—my horse, d'ye hear?" shouted he over the battlements, and then rushed down stairs.

Sir Patrick followed him, with the determination of accompanying him to the blazing town. Both speedily donned their riding-gear and light armour, and sallied forth. On the terrace they found a crowd of the nobles and knights collected together in amazement. The Earl only stopped to throw out a few hasty words of apology for so abruptly leaving his guests, and then, accompanied by Hepborne, descended to the courtyard, vociferating loudly for their horses. In a short time both mounted and galloped off, attended by a few horsemen, who threw themselves hastily into their saddles.

"Let us take our way by the Mead of St

John's," cried the Earl, pushing his horse thitherward; "we can cross the river by the bridge, and we shall then be able to alarm the people, who have there a temporary abode at present. Their aid will be of much avail, if, as I fear, all aid be not already too late."

On they galloped through the dark alleys of the forest, every now and then overtaking some straggler, who was hurrying on, out of breath, in the direction they were going, shouting at intervals to those who had outrun him, or who had lagged behind him; but when they reached the Mead of St John's, those plains, which were lately so full of animation, were now silent as death; not a human being seemed to have remained within their ample circuit; all had been already summoned away, some by anxiety to arrest the destruction of their houses and goods, others by the charitable wish to assist in subduing the conflagration, and others, again, by the nefarious desire and hope of an opportunity of pilfering, but the greater number by that universal human passion, curiosity.

"Let us hasten onwards to Forres, for there is no one here," cried the good Earl, after riding in vain over part of the ground, and knocking and shouting at most of the temporary erections on the Eastern Mead, as he swept past them.

"This way, Sir Patrick; our road lies up this steep bank; I hope some good may yet be done by the united force of such multitudes. By St Andrew, it was good they were here; and 'twill be a lucky tournament if it be the means of stopping this sad malure."

Sir Patrick followed him over some irregular hillocks, covered with the forest; and, winding amongst them, they entered a defile, where the trees grew thinner, giving place, in a great measure, to a natural shrubbery, composed of scattered bushes of furze, broom, and juniper. The fire had been all this time hid from their eyes, but it burst upon them through the farther opening of the defile in all its terrific grandeur, at about a mile's distance. The destructive element had now all the appearance of speedily gaining resistless dominion over the little town, for the several independent detachments of flame which had appeared in different parts of it as they had surveyed it from the Castle, had now run together, and united themselves into one great sea of red and overwhelming destruction, that heaved and tossed its tumultuous billows high into the air. The appalling blaze filled up the entire sky that was visible through the defile they were threading. Against the bright field it presented, a dark group of armed horse-

men were seen standing on the path before them, where it wound from among the hillocks, their figures being sharply relieved against the broad gleam beyond. The Earl of Moray reined up his steed, but his previous speed had been such, that he was almost upon them ere he could check him.

CHAPTER X.

"By'r Lady, but the bonfire brens right merrily," cried a stern voice, which they immediately knew to be that of the Wolfe of Badenoch. "Ha! is't not gratifying to behold? Morte de ma vie, see there, son Alexander, how the Archdeacon's manse belches forth its flaming bowels against the welkin. By St Barnabas, but thou mayest tell the very blaze of it from that of any other house, by the changes produced in it by the abundant variety of ingredients that feed it. Thou seest the cobwebby church consumeth but soberly and meekly, as a church should; but the proud mansion of the Archdeacon brenneth with a clear fire, that haughtily proclaims the costly fuel it hath got to maintain it,—his crimson damask and velvets,—his gorgeous chairs and tables—his richly-carved cabinets—his musty manuscripts, the which do furnish most excellent matter of combustion. By the mass, but that sudden quench-

ing of the flame must have been owing to the fall of some of those swollen down-beds, and ponderous blankets, in which these lazy churchmen are wont to snore away their useless lives. But, ha! see how it blazes up again; perdie, it hath doubtless reached the larder; some of his fattest bacon must have been there; meseems as if I did nose the savoury fumes of it even here. Ha!—glorious!—look what a fire-spout is there. Never trust me, if that brave and brilliant feu d'artifice doth not arise from the besotted clerk's well-stored cellars. Ha, ha, ha!—there go his malvoisie and his eau-de-vie. The vinolent costrel's thirsty soul was ever in his casks; so, by the Rood, thou seest, that maugre every suspicion and belief to the contrary, it hath yet some chance of mounting heavenward after all. Ha, ha, ha! by the beard of my grandfather, but it is a right glorious spectacle to behold."

"My Lord brother-in-law," cried the Earl of Moray, in a voice of horror and dismay, as he now advanced towards the group, "can it be? Is it really thou who speakest thus?"

"Ha, Sir Earl of Moray," cried the Wolfe, starting and turning sharply round, "what makest thou here, I pray thee? Methought that ere this thou wert merry in thy wine wassail?"

"Nay, perhaps I should have been so," replied the Earl of Moray temperately, "had not news of yonder doleful burning banished all note of mirth from my board. Knowest thou aught of how this grievous disaster may have befallen?"

"Ha, ha, ha! canst thou not guess, brother of mine?" cried the Wolfe, with a sarcastic laugh.

"I must confess I am not without my fears as to who did kindle yonder wide-spreading calamity," said the Earl of Moray gravely; "yet still do I hang by the hope that it was impossible thou could'st have brought thyself to be the author of so cruel, so horrible, so sacrilegious a deed. Even the insatiable thirst of revenge itself, directed as it was against one individual, could hardly have led thee to wrap the holy house of God, and the dwellings of the innocent and inoffensive burghers, in the same common ruin with the tenements belonging to those whom thou mayest suspect as being entitled to a share of thy vengeance. 'Tis impossible."

"Ha! by the flames of Tartarus, but it is possible," cried the Wolfe, gnashing his teeth; "yea, and by all the fiends, I have right starkly proved the possibility of it too. What! dost think that I might have spared the church, the which

is the very work-shop of these mass-mongering magpies? Or was I, thinkest thou, to stop my fell career of vengeance, because the beggarly hovels of some dozen pitiful tailors, brogue-men, skinners, hammermen, and cordwainers, stood in my way?—trash alswa, who pay rent and dues to this same nigon and papelarde Priest-Bishop, who hath dared to pour out his venomous malison on the son of a King, on the Wolfe of Badenoch! By all the infernal powers, but the surface of the very globe itself shall smoke till my revenge be full. This is but a foretaste of the wrekery I shall work; and if the prating jackdaw's noxious curse be not removed, ay, and that speedily too, by him that rules the infernal realms I swear, that the walthsome toad and all the vermin that hang upon him, shall have tenfold worse than this to dree!"

"Alexander Stewart!" cried a clear and commanding voice, which came suddenly and tremendously, like that of the last trumpet, from the summit of the knoll immediately above where the group was standing. There was an awful silence for some moments; a certain chill of superstitious dread stole over every one present; nay, even the ferocious and undaunted Earl of Buchan himself felt his heart grow cold within him, at the almost more than human

sound. He looked upwards to the bare pinnacle of the rising ground, and there, standing beside a scathed and blasted oak, he beheld a tall figure enveloped in black drapery. The irregular blaze of the distant conflagration came only by fits to illumine the dusky and mysterious figure, and the face, sunk within a deep cowl, was but rarely and transiently rendered visible by it, though the eyes, more frequently catching the light, were often seen to glare fearfully, when all the other features were buried in shade, giving a somewhat fiendish appearance to the spectre.

"Alexander Stewart!" cried the thrilling voice again; "Alexander Stewart, thou grim and cruel Wolfe, when will the measure of thine iniquity be filled up? Thou sweepest over fair creation, levelling alike the works of God and man, regardless of human misery, like the dire angel of destruction; the very green of the earth is turned into blood, and hearts are rent beneath every tramp of thy horse's hooves: yet art thou but as a blind instrument in the hands of the righteous Avenger; and when thou shalt have served the end for which thou wert created, verily thou shalt be cast into eternal fire. If thou would'st yet escape the punishment which speedily awaits thine atrocities, hasten to bow, in penitence, before those altars thou

hast dared to pollute, and make full reparation to the holy ministers of religion for the unheard of insults and injuries thou hast offered them. Do this, or thine everlasting doom is fixed; death shall speedily overtake thee, and thou shalt writhe amidst the ineffable torments of never-ceasing flames."

As the voice ceased, there arose from the distant town a strong and more enduring gleam of light, which rendered visible every little broom-blossom and heath-bell that grew upon the side of the knoll, and threw a pale but distinct illumination over the features of the figure.

"Holy Virgin! blessed St Andrew! 'tis the mysterious Franciscan," whispered several of the Earl of Buchan's attendants, as they crossed themselves, in evident alarm.

"Ha! is it thee, thou carrion chough?" cried the Wolfe of Badenoch, recovering from the surprise and dismay into which he had been plunged by so unexpected and fearful a warning from one whom he had not at first recognized; "ha! morte de ma vie," cried he, couching his lance, digging the spurs deep into his horse's flanks, and making him bound furiously up the slope of the knoll; "by all the furies, thou shalt not 'scape me this bout, an thou be not a very fiend. Haste, Alexander, ride round the hill."

"This way, villains," cried Sir Alexander Stewart, instantly obedient to his father's command; "this way, one half of ye, and that way the other half. Let not the caitiff escape us; take him alive or dead; by the mass, it matter-eth not which."

Divided into little parties, the Wolfe's attendants spurred off to opposite points of the compass, in order to encircle the hill. The figure had already disappeared from the pinnacle it stood on, but the furious Earl of Buchan still pushed his panting horse up the steep ascent, until he disappeared over the top. The Earl of Moray and Sir Patrick Hepborne remained for some time in mute astonishment, perfectly at a loss what to think or how to act. Shouts were heard on all sides of the hillock; but in a short time they ceased, and the individuals of the Wolfe of Badenoch's party came dropping in one by one, with faces in which superstitious dread was very strongly depicted.

"Didst thou see him?" demanded one. "Nay, I thank the Virgin, I saw him not," replied another. "Whither can he have vanished?" cried a third. "Vanished indeed!" cried a fourth, shuddering, and looking over his shoulder. "Ave Maria, sweet Virgin, defend us, it must

have been a spirit," cried another in a voice of the utmost consternation.

"Hold your accursed prating," cried the Wolfe of Badenoch, who now appeared, with his sons clustered at his back, all bearing it up boldly, yet all of them, even the stout Earl himself, much disturbed and troubled in countenance. "Ha!" continued he, "by all that is good, there is something strange and uncommon about that same friar. I know not well what to think. I bid thee good-bye, brother-in-law; I wot, we part but as half friends; yet commend me to Margery.—Sir Patrick Hepborne, when it pleaseth thee to come to Lochyndorbe, thou shalt be right welcome.—Allons, son Alexander, we must thither to-night yet for our hostelry; so forward, I say;" and saying so, he rode away at the head of his party.

"Rash and intemperate man," cried the good Earl of Moray, in a tone of extreme distress and vexation, as he turned his horse's head towards Forres, "what is it thou hast done? Into what cruel and disgraceful outrage hath thy furious wreken driven thee? The very thought of this ferocious deed being thine, is to me more bitter than ligne-aloes. The noble and the peasant must now alike hold thee accursed for thy red crimes. Hadst thou not been my wife's brother,

and the son of my liege lord the King, I must of needscost have done my best to have seized thee straightway; but Heaven seemeth to be itself disposed to take cognizance of thy coulpe, for in truth he was a more than mortal messenger who pronounced that dread denunciation against thee."

The solemn silence with which these words were received by Sir Patrick, showed how much his thoughts were in unison with those of the Earl.

"But let us prick onwards," cried Lord Moray, starting from his musing fit; "every moment may be precious."

They had not gone many yards, when they heard the mingled sounds of numerous voices, and found themselves in the midst of a great crowd of people of all ages, and of both sexes, who, idle and unconcerned, had taken post on the brow of the hill, and now stood, or lay on the ground in groups, calmly contemplating the rapid destruction that was going on in the little town, and giving way to thoughtless expressions of wonder and delight, at the various changes of the aspect of the combustion.

"Why stand ye here, idlers?" cried the Earl of Moray, riding in among them, and stirring up some of them with the shaft of his lance;

"come, rouse ye, my friends; shame on ye to liggen here, when ye might have bestirred ye to save the town; come, rouse ye, I say."

"Nay, by the mass, I'll not budge," cried one.—"'Tis no concern of mine," cried another. —"Nay, nor of mine," cried a third.—"I do but come here to sell my wares at the tourney," cried a fourth.

"Depardieux, but every mother's son of ye shall move," cried the Earl, indignant at their apathy.

"And who art thou, who dost talk thus high?" gruffly demanded one of the fellows, as he raised a sort of pole-axe in a half-defensive and half-menacing attitude.

"I am John Dunbar, Earl of Moray," replied the Earl resolutely; "and by St Andrew, if ye do not every one of ye make the best of your way to Forres sans delay, and put forth what strength ye may to stop the brenning of the poor people's houses and goods, I will order down an armed band from the Castle, who shall consume and burn to tinder every tent, booth, bale, and box, that now cumbereth the Meads of St John. Will ye on with me now, knaves, or no?"

"Holy Virgin, an thou be'st the good Earl," cried the fellow, lowering his pole-axe, "I hum-

bly crave thy pardon; verily we are all thine humble slaves. Come, come, my masters, run, I pray ye, 'tis the good Earl John. Fie, fie, let's on with him, and do his bidding, though we bren for it."

"Huzza! for the good Earl John—huzza! let's on with the good Earl of Moray," cried they all.

"Mine honest men," cried the Earl, "I want not thy services for nought. Trust me, I shall note those who work best, and they shall not go guerdonless; and if ye should all be made as dry as cinders, by hard and hot swinking, ye shall be rendered as moist as well-filled sponges, with stout ale, at the Castle, after all is over."

"Huzza, for the good Earl John! huzza, for the good Earl of Moray!" shouted the rabble; and he rode off, followed by every man of them, each being well resolved in his own mind to earn his skinful of beer.

As the Earl and Sir Patrick were pushing up towards the ridge along which the town was situated, the shouts of men, and the dismal screams and wailings of women and children, arose from time to time from within it. The good nobleman redoubled his speed as he heard them, and the party soon reached the main street, the

scene of confusion, misery, and devastation. The way was choked with useless crowds, who so encumbered those who were disposed to exert themselves, that little effectual opposition could be given to the fury of the fire. Amidst the shrieks and cries which burst forth at intervals from the mob, the Earl's ears were shocked by the loud curses on the Wolfe of Badenoch, that were uttered by the frantic sufferers. But no sooner was he recognized, than his arrival was hailed with acclamations of joy and gratitude, which drowned the expression of every other feeling.

"Here comes the good Earl."—"The Virgin be praised, blessed be St Laurence that the Earl hath come."—"Ay, ay, all will go well now sith he is here."—"Stand aside there—stand aside, and let us hear his commands."

The Earl and Sir Patrick Hepborne hastily surveyed the wide scene of ruin, and were soon aware of its full extent. The manse of the Archdeacon, to which the incendiaries had first set fire, was already reduced to a heap of ashes. The priest who owned it, had fled in terror for his life when it was first assailed; and the greater part, if not all the population of the little burgh, having been employed on the Mead

of St John's, in the preparations for the tournament, or in loitering as idle spectators of what was going on there, little interruption was given to the vengeful Wolfe of Badenoch in his savage work. He and his troop were tamely allowed to stand by, until they had seen the residence of the churchman so beleaguered by the raging element that little hope could remain of saving any part of it. He next set fire to one end of the church; and ere he and his party mounted to effect their retreat, they fired one or two of the intervening houses. Many of the tenements being of wood, and the roofs mostly thatched with straw, the fire spread so rapidly, as very soon to form itself into one great conflagration, that threatened to extend widely on all sides. Still, however, it was confined to one part of the town, and there yet remained much to save. Hitherto there had been no head to direct; but the moment the Earl appeared, all were prepared to give implicit and ready obedience to his orders. He took his determination in a few minutes, and imparting his plan to Hepborne, they proceeded to carry it into instant execution.

The portion of the street that was already in flames had been abandoned by the people, the fire having gained so hopeless an ascendency

there, that all efforts to subdue it would have been vain. The Earl, therefore, resolved to devote his attention to confining it within its present limits. He stationed himself within a few yards of that extremity which they had first reached, and having ordered the crowd to withdraw farther off, he brought forward the useful and active, in such numbers as might be able to work with ease, and he began to pull down some of the most worthless of the houses. Hepborne, in the meanwhile, called together a few hardy and fearless-looking men, and followed by these and Mortimer Sang, who was rarely ever missed from his master's back when anything serious or perilous was going forward, he proceeded, at the risk of life, to ride down the narrow street, between two walls of fire, where blazing beams and rafters were falling thick around them. His chief object was to get to the farther boundary of the conflagration, and he might have effected this by making a wide circuit around the town; but, besides gaining time, by forcing the shorter and more desperate passage, the generous knight was anxious to ascertain, whether, amidst the confusion that prevailed, some unfortunate wretches might not have been left to their fate among the blazing edifices.

He moved slowly and cautiously onwards, his horse starting and prancing every now and then, as the burning ruins fell, or as fresh bursts of flame took place, and steering a difficult course among the smoking fragments that strewed the street, or the heaped-up goods and movables, which their owners had not had time to convey farther to some place of greater security, he peered eagerly into every door, window, and crevice, and listened with all his attention for the sound of a human voice. More than once his eyes and his ears were deceived, and he frequently stopped, in doubt whether he should not rush boldly through fire and smoke, to rescue some one whom his fancy had caused him, for an instant, to imagine perishing within. His mind being so intensely occupied, it is no wonder that he could pay but little attention to his own preservation; and accordingly he received several rude shocks, and was at last fairly knocked down from his saddle by the end of a great blazing log, which grazed his shoulder as it descended from a house he was standing under. Mortimer Sang caught the reins of his master's horse, and Sir Patrick was speedily raised from the ground by the people who were near him; and he regained his seat,

having fortunately escaped with some slight bruises received from the fall, and a contusion on his shoulder, arising from the blow given him by the beam.

CHAPTER XI.

Sir Patrick Hepborne had hardly recovered himself, when, as he was passing a house to which the fire had but just communicated, he encountered a crowd of people rushing out, hastily attired in all manner of strange coverings. It was the inn of the burgh. Among those who came forth, there was one gigantic figure, who ran against his horse like a battering-ram, and almost threw the animal on his haunches by the concussion. Ere Hepborne could recover himself the monster was gone; but his attention was quickly diverted from this incident, by the sound of a voice chanting irregularly in broken song, mingled with the notes of a harp. It came from the upper part of the building. The house, though extending a good way backwards from the street, was of two stories only; but as the flames were briskly attacking the lower part, no time was to be lost in making the musician leave it.

Hepborne sprang from his horse, and hastening down a lane to the door-way, rushed up the narrow stair, and being led by the ear towards the music, ran along a passage, and entered an apartment over the gable next the street, where, to his utter astonishment, he beheld the minstrel, Adam of Gordon, seated on a stool, in his night-cap and under-garments, accompanying his voice, by striking wild chords upon the harp, and looking upwards at intervals, as if seeking inspiration.

"Adam of Gordon," cried Hepborne, in absolute amazement, "what dost thou here? Quick, quick, old man, thy life is in peril; throw on thy cloak and fly with me; the flames gain upon us."

"Nay, Sir Knight," said the minstrel, "disturb me not, I beseech thee; I do but work myself here into proper bardic enthusiasm, that I may the better describe the grandeur of this terrific scene. Trust me, this is the minstrel's golden moment; let it not pass by unimproved." And saying so he again began to strike on his harp, and to recur to his subject.

"The raging flame in fury swept,
It seized their chamber where they slept,
Along the wasting floor it crept,
Where lock'd in virtuous love they lay.

She dream't, that on a bed of flowers,
Beneath the cool and fragrant bowers,
With him she wasted happy hours;
She waked—she shriek'd! she swoon'd away!—
He quick uprose, in wild alarm,
To snatch his love———"

"Nay, Adam, this is absolute madness, for whilst thou art composing thy ballad, we shall both be brent. Haste thee, old man. Hark! There was the crash of falling ruins."

"One stanza more, I entreat thee, Sir Knight; my brain is hot with my subject.

"To snatch his love from threatening harm,
He clasp'd her in his vigorous arm."

"Nay, then," said Hepborne, "I must of needscost enclasp thee in mine, or we shall both perish;" and snatching up, with one hand, the minstrel's drapery that lay beside him, he lifted old Adam, harp and all, high in his other arm, and carried him down the stair on his shoulder; whilst the bard, entirely occupied with his subject, was hardly conscious of being removed from his position, and went on chanting and strumming,—

"He quick uprose, in wild alarm,
To snatch his love from threatening harm;
He clasp'd her in his vigorous arm,
And rush'd———

Holy St Cuthbert, I'm choked! I'm—pugh! —ooh!"

A sudden stop was indeed put to his song by the smoke through which Hepborne was condemned to force his way with his burden, and the harp accompaniment was effectually silenced by the flames which shot over them on either hand, and burnt off the strings of the instrument. Hepborne bore the minstrel bravely into the street.

"Where is thy steed, Adam?" demanded Hepborne, as he set him down.

"In the stable behind," replied the minstrel, somewhat brought to his senses by the danger which he now saw had threatened him. Hepborne immediately dispatched some of those who were with him to fetch out the horse.

"Heaven bless thee for my safety, Sir Knight," said Adam; "but now that I am beyond risk, if it so please thee, I would gladly saunter through the burning town alone, to gather hints for the garniture of my ballad."

"Nay, nay, old man," replied Hepborne, quickly, "this is no place for thee. Here cometh thy little curtal nag—mount thee straightway, and hie thee to Tarnawa with this man, who shall guide thee thither. There thou may'st inquire for a page of mine, called Maurice de Grey, who will quickly make thee known to my Lady the Countess of Moray; she will be

right glad to see any one of minstrel kind in these times of tournament. But stay," added Hepborne, laughing to observe the grotesque figure of the half-clad minstrel on horseback; "Here, throw his cloak over him, and hasten hence with him beyond danger. Away, away from hence, or ye are lost," cried he, with increased rapidity of utterance; and the group had hardly time to make their horses spring from the spot, ere the front wall of a house, slowly cracking and rending, fell with a tremendous crash into the street, and they were divided from each other by the heaped-up debris. Satisfied, however, of the minstrel's safety, Sir Patrick now hurried on to the post which the Earl of Moray had assigned him, at the farther extremity of the conflagration.

A considerable vacant space around the church had fortunately prevented the fire from spreading beyond it. The holy edifice itself was burning slowly, yet so little attention had been paid to it, that the choir, which the incendiaries had first inflamed, was already almost consumed. Sir Patrick Hepborne immediately established two lines of people, extending between the church and a neighbouring well, so that buckets of water were conveyed with great rapidity towards it, and the supply in this way was so great, that

he soon succeeded in preventing the flames from spreading to the other parts of the building; and their progress being once arrested, they at last began to sink of themselves, from lack of combustible materials, and by degrees were altogether subdued, by the crowds of active and well-directed men, who thought and talked of nothing but the Castle-beer, and who worked to earn a skinful of it.

The sun had now risen on the scene of desolation. Toil-spent, and overwhelmed with grief at the misery which appeared around him, as well as vexation at the thought of how it had been occasioned, the Earl dismounted from his horse, and sat himself disconsolately down on a stone by the side of the way. There Hepborne found, and saluted him for the first time since their separation of the previous evening.

"'Tis a grievous spectacle, my Lord Earl," said Sir Patrick, as he observed the affliction that was pourtrayed on his lordship's countenance, "'tis indeed a grievous spectacle; but thou hast the pleasing gratification of thinking, that without thy timely presence here, the ruin must have spread itself wider, and that if it had not been for thy well-timed counsels and generous exertions, not a house would have been remaining at this moment within the burgh."

"Alas!" exclaimed the Earl, in a tone of extreme mortification, "grievous as the calamity is, I am less moved by it than with the tormenting reflection that it was the work of my wife's brother. 'Tis piteous, indeed, to listen to the lamenting of those helpless and innocent people, but their wounds may be speedily salved by the aid of a little paltry gold; whilst those which the Earl of Buchan hath inflicted on the hearts of all connected with him, by allowing a brutal thirst of revenge to make him guilty of an act so cruel and outrageous, must fester and rankle for many a day. What will the good old grey-headed Monarch suffer when the news do reach him? Verily, it doleth me sorely, that by my marriage I should be sykered with one who hath the fear of God so little before his eyes. Yet must I not think of it. It behoveth me now to remedy the mischief he hath wrought, and to set about relieving the more immediate wants of the wretched people who have lost their houses and their all. Here, Martin," cried he to one of his esquires, "take these tablets; seek out some one who is well informed as to the town and its inhabitants, and quickly bring me a careful list of the houses that have been burned, together with the name, sex, age, and condition of the inmates."

The squire hastened to obey the Earl's command. Several of the knights, his guests, who had followed him from the Castle, and who had given him good assistance in extinguishing the fire, now came about him, pouring out liberal congratulations on the success of his well-conceived and promptly-executed measures; and while they formed a knot around him, they were in their turn surrounded by crowds of the lower sort of people, composed partly of the homeless sufferers, who were weeping and wailing for the calamity that had befallen themselves and their little ones, and pouring out curses against the ferocious Wolfe of Badenoch, who had brought all this misery upon them. But these execrations on the Earl of Buchan were not unmingled with blessings on the Earl of Moray for his timely aid, without which the speakers felt that they too might have been by this time rendered as destitute as their less fortunate neighbours. Then many were the clamorous entreaties for charitable succour; whilst those indifferent persons, who had assisted in subduing the conflagration, were elbowing one another, and uttering many a broad and rustic hint of the reward they looked for. At length Martin appeared with his list.

"Here," said the Earl aside to him, "into thy faithful hands do I confide this purse; 'tis for the more immediate relief of those poor people. Leave not the town until thou hast inquired into circumstances, and done all thou canst to secure temporary accommodation for those who have been rendered houseless. I shall take care to provide more permanent aid for them anon."

This order, though given in a half whisper, was caught up by some of those miserables, whose wretched and forlorn state had quickened their ears to every sound which gave them the hope of relief. The news of the Earl's humane bounty spread among them more rapidly than the fire had done over their possessions and property. Their gratitude burst forth in shouts:

"God bless the noble Earl of Moray!"—"Long live our noble preserver!"—"Heaven reward our kind benefactor!"—"If his brother, the wicked Wolfe of Badenoch, be a destroying devil, surely the good Earl of Moray is a protecting angel!"—"May the best gifts of the Virgin be upon him and his!"

The Earl called for his horse, and mounted amid the cheers of the populace.

"Let all those who lent me their friendly aid on this occasion forthwith follow me to the Castle," cried he; and, glad to escape from praises,

which, as they were bestowed on him at the expense of the brother of his Countess, gave him more of pain than pleasure, he turned his horse's head in the direction of the Castle, and rode off, accompanied by Sir Patrick Hepborne and the rest of the knights who were with him, and followed at a distance by a shouting and ragamuffin rabble, who were eager to moisten their hot and parched throats from the capacious and hospitably-flowing cellars of Tarnawa.

CHAPTER XII.

The Earl and his friends had no sooner reached Tarnawa, than they retired, each to his own chamber, to enjoy a few hours' rest. Sir Patrick Hepborne made inquiry for his page, but the latter was nowhere to be found at the time; so, leaving orders that the youth should be in attendance, he gladly committed his wearied limbs to the comforts of his couch.

It was about midday when he raised his head from his pillow, and his first thought was to call for Maurice de Grey; but a lacquey informed him that the youth had not yet appeared. He sent the man for Mortimer Sang, and when the esquire came, he was much disappointed to learn that he had seen or heard nothing of the boy.

"Go then, I pr'ythee," said Sir Patrick, "and make diligent inquiry for the youth through the Castle, and when thou hast found him, send him hither without a moment's delay. Verily,

it seemeth that he doth already begin to forget that I am his master."

Sang hastened to obey, but remained absent much longer than Sir Patrick, in his anxiety about the boy, could think reasonable. The knight walked hastily about the room, and at length becoming very impatient, he sent first one lacquey, and then another, after the esquire. At last Mortimer Sang returned.

"Well, where is Maurice de Grey?" demanded Hepborne.

"By the mass, Sir Knight, I can gain no tidings of him."

"'Tis very strange," replied the knight, with a look of much vexation. "I do much fear me that the youth is of a truant disposition; it was indeed that which gave him to me. He ran away from his paternal home and from maternal care, united himself to my party, and how oft did he solemnly and hautently vow never to quit me until death should sever us! His present absence doth wear a very mysterious and suspicious aspect.—Hath the old harper been seen?" demanded Sir Patrick, after a pause, during which he paced the room two or three times backwards and forwards.

"Nay, Sir Knight," replied the squire, "he [illegible] not been visible."

"Depardieux, then they must have gone off together," replied Sir Patrick, with a tone of extreme dissatisfaction; "'tis most like that the minstrel, who must have known him before, hath aided, and, perhaps, been the partner of his escape. Yes, they must have been well acquainted, seeing that old Adam did so greatly frequent the English Border, and that he was so much esteemed by the Lady Eleanore de ——, I mean, by the page's kinswoman. Well, I shall feel the loss of the boy's company, for, sooth to say, his prattle did often beguile me of a dull hour. Truly, he was a shrewd and winning youth; but I am sore grieved to discover that he hath had in him such deceit, and so little feeling for the kindness I did ever show him."

With these words, the knight threw himself on the couch, altogether unable to conceal the chagrin and distress of mind he was suffering.

"Perdie, I should have been as a father to that boy," said he again; "I should have made him a knight worthy of the highest place in the annals of chivalry. The youth seemed to value, yea, and to give heed to my counsels too; nay, the admiration with which he looked up to me might have been almost considered as ridiculous, had it not been viewed as the offspring of extreme attachment. He spoke as if he imagined that I

was all excellence, all perfection. What strange cause can have occasioned his so sudden abandonment of me, and that too without having given me the smallest warning or hint of his intention? Did not I, more than once, tell him that I should be willing to aid his return to his friends, should he ever feel a desire to do so? His escapade is an utter mystery to me. Ha! I have it," continued he, after a short pause of consideration; "I trow, I have hit it at last. The youth hath some turn, nay, and, I wot, no mean one neither, for poesy and song; moreover, he toucheth the harp with liard and skilful fingers; and seeing that he is fond of change, he hath, 'tis like, taken fancy to become a troubadour, and so hath exchanged me as his master for old Adam of Gordon. Well, well, why should I vex myself about a silly, careless, truant boy?"

But Sir Patrick did, notwithstanding, vex himself most abundantly, and, nearly an hour afterwards, he was found, still lying in peevish and fretful soliloquy, by Mortimer Sang, who entered his chamber, with a message from the Countess of Moray, entreating his company in her apartment for a short conference. Sir Patrick hastily prepared himself to attend her, and

was immediately ushered into her presence by a squire in waiting.

He found his noble hostess seated with the Lady Jane de Vaux, in the midst of her damsels, some of whom were employed in idle chit-chat, others in singing, from time to time, to the harp or guitar, whilst the rest were assisting in an extensive work of embroidery. They were immediately dismissed on his entrance, and the Countess came forward graciously to receive him.

"I fear, Sir Patrick," said she, "that I may have perhaps broken in rather prematurely upon those hours of repose which the fatigue of yesternight's violent, though charitable, exertions had doubtless rendered as welcome as they were necessary. The Earl, my husband, was so overspent with toil when he returned this morning, that he was buried in slumber ere I had time to question him as to the cause of the calamity, or even as to its full extent. I was on the eve of entreating a few minutes' audience of thee at that time, that I might have my curiosity satisfied, but just as I was about to send my page to crave this boon of thee, thy page Maurice de Grey came hither, and informed me that thou also hadst betaken thee to thy couch. I have thus been compelled to champ the bit of impatience ever sithence; but, impatient as I am,

I shall not easily forgive myself if I have been the means of rudely disturbing thy needful refreshment."

"My page!" cried the knight, with a mixture of surprise and eagerness, that made him forget everything else that the Countess had said to him, "verily, I have been seeking and sending for my page during the greater part of the morning. I beseech your ladyship, when was the little varlet here, and what could have induced him to be so bold as to intrude himself on the privacy of the Countess of Moray?"

"Nay," replied the Countess, with an air of surprise no less strong than that of Sir Patrick, "I did assuredly think that it was thou who didst order him to come hither. He came to introduce a certain minstrel to my notice, and in so doing, to take the opportunity of paying his duty to me, by thine own desire, ere the old man and he should depart hence together."

"Depart hence!" cried Hepborne, with still greater astonishment, mingled with excessive vexation; "depart hence, didst thou say? So then the heartless boy hath really left me. Of a truth, when first I missed him, I did suspect that he and the minstrel had gone off together. Whither have they gone, I do beseech thee?"

"Nay, that is indeed miraculous," replied

the Countess; "'tis indeed miraculous, I say, that thou should'st not have known the page was going away; for albeit he did not positively say so, yet did he so counterfeit with us, that I for one did never doubt but that he came hither by thy very command, to do his obeisance to me ere he should yede him hence. 'Tis a right artful youth, I'll warrant me. Nay, Sir Knight, methinks thou hast good reason to congratulate thyself on being so happily rid of a cunning chit, who mought have worked thee much evil by his tricks. Of a truth, I liked not his looks over much.—"

"Forgive me, noble lady," cried the Knight, "I cannot hear the boy spoken of otherwise than as he may in justice deserve. I saw not ever any trick or mischief in him; on the contrary, he did always appear most doced in his demeanour and service. Moreover, he is a boy of most sensible remark, and more prudence of conduct than one might reasonably look for in a head so young and inexperienced; then as for his heart, it was warmer than any I ever met with in old or young. I trow he did prove to me more than once that his attachment to my person was something beyond mere pretence. Twice did he nearly sacrifice his life for me. What can have induced him to go off thus se-

cretly? Had I been cruel to him, he might have fled from me with good reason; but I loved the boy as I should have loved a younger brother, yea, or a son, if I had had one. There was so much gentleness about him; yet lacked he not a sly, sharp, and subtle wit."

"Yea, of a truth, he hath a wit," cried the Lady Jane de Vaux archly; "ay, and as you say, Sir Knight, 'tis indeed a sharp one. How the wicked rogue did amuse us by the rehearsal of thy loves, Sir Knight! I do mean thy loves for his fair cousin, the beauteous Lady Eleanore de Selby. Ha, ha, ha! parfoy, the varlet did stir up some excellent good-humoured pleasantry and merry laughter in us."

"In truth, his stories were most amusing," said the Countess; "trust me, it is a smart and witty little knave as ever I saw."

"A most rare and laughter-stirring imp, indeed," cried the Lady Jane de Vaux; "nay, the mere remembrance of him doth provoke me yet—ha, ha, ha!"

Sir Patrick Hepborne stood confounded and abashed to find himself thus unexpectedly placed as a butt for the ridicule of the two ladies.

"My noble Countess of Moray, and you, beauteous Lady Jane de Vaux, you do seem to have vouchsafed me the honour of being your

quintaine this morning—the targe against the which you may gaily prove the sharp points of your merry wit. Depardieux, my lot in being so selected is to be envied, not deplored; and I must thank you for the distinguished preference you have deigned to show me. Yet cannot I but feel disappointment most severe, to discover thus that a youth, towards whom I was so well affected, should have requited my love so ill-favouredly. Of a truth, the wicked knave hath been most indiscreet. And yet meseems that I have myself been even more indiscreet than he, since the secret was altogether mine own, and I ought to have kept it better."

"In good sooth, we were much indebted to the imp for his information," said the Lady Jane de Vaux; "for to be free with thee, Sir Knight, our stock of female curiosity, the which was raised highly by the public refusal of so renowned a chevalier to drink a pledge to his lady love, was beginning to be much an overmatch for our limited store of patience. Our appetite for intelligence regarding the state of thy heart was waxing so great, that had not this boy of thine come to us this morning, to open his wallet and satisfy our craving, we might ere this have been dead of mere starvation. His visit here was quite a blessing to us."

"By St Andrew, I am thunderstruck," cried the Knight. "Depardieu, the young caitiff hath indeed deceived me deeply in thus betraying the most sacred secret of my heart."

"Of a truth, thine unexampled constancy did deserve better treatment, Sir Knight," said the Countess, with a tone and manner tinged with a certain degree of asperity and sarcasm, which Hepborne hardly believed that amiable lady could have assumed; whilst, at the same time, she and Jane de Vaux exchanged very significant looks. With an effort to command herself, however, she turned the conversation rather suddenly towards the subject of the burning of Forres; and after gathering from Hepborne the general circumstances of that calamity, she, with more than usual dignity, signified to him her wish to be alone, and he retired to his apartment, to fret himself about the loss of his page, and the provoking circumstances by which it was accompanied.

CHAPTER XIII.

Sir Patrick Hepborne left the apartments of the Countess of Moray melancholy and unhappy. He retired to his own chamber, to ruminate on the ingratitude of his heartless page; and when the hour of the banquet arrived, he went to the Hall of Randolph with a mind but little attuned to harmonize with its festivities. But it was more in unison with his feelings than he had anticipated. The Countess of Moray, who was by this time fully aware that the destructive fire of Forres had been kindled by her brother's hand, was unable to appear; and her example was followed by most of the other ladies. The Earl of Fife, too, and several other nobles and knights, were absent. The Earl of Moray was indeed present; but he was there only in body, for his thoughts seemed to be elsewhere. All his attempts to rally his spirits were unavailing, and the sombre air which hung upon his countenance speedily spread along the gay

ranks of the festive board, to the extinction of everything like mirth.

In this state of things, the Earl speedily broke up the feast. He had serious thoughts of breaking up the tournament also, and these he privately communicated to his brother-in-law the Earl of Fife; but that crafty politician objected to a measure which could only make his brother's outrage the more talked of; and he had a still stronger reason in his own mind, for he did not wish to be deprived of the opportunity, afforded him by the tournament, of gaining over friends to the party he was forming to strengthen his own power. It was, therefore, finally determined that, next day, it should be solemnly proclaimed by the heralds.

The Earl of Moray and his lady passed a sleepless night, turning in their minds how they could best repair the wrong done by their brother, the Wolfe of Badenoch. Early in the morning, one of the Countess's favourite damsels, Katherine Spears by name, came to beseech an audience of the Earl for her father, Rory Spears. There was nothing extraordinary in this request, for the Earl was so much the friend of his people, that he was ever ready to lend an ear to the complaints of the meanest individual among them. The man who now

craved an interview was an old partizan of the Earl's, who had fought under his banner and at his back in many a battle, and who was employed in time of peace in hunting, hawking, and fishing.

As the Earl had a peculiar regard for Rory Spears, the damsel was ordered to send him up immediately to a small turret-room, where his lordship usually received people in his rank of life. Rory's heavy fishing-boots were soon heard ascending the turret-stair, and his bulky figure appeared, followed by a great rough allounde and one or two terriers. As Katherine showed him in, there was something peculiarly striking in the contrast between her sylphlike figure, delicate face, and ladylike air, and his herculean mould and rough-hewn features, in which there was a strangely-mixed and contradictory expression of acuteness and simplicity, good nature and sullen testiness. His huge shoulders had a natural bend forward, and a profusion of grizzled curls mingled in bushy luxuriance with the abundant produce of his cheeks, lips, and chin. On his head was a close red hood, that lay over his neck and back, and he wore a coarse grey woollen jerkin and hauselines, covered with an ample upper garment of the same materials, and of a form much resembling

that constituting a part of the fisherman's garb of the present day. In one hand he brandished a long pole with a sharp iron hook at the end of it, the bend of the hook being projected into a long pike, and the whole so constructed as to be equally serviceable as a hunting-spear or as a fish-clip. He stooped yet more as he entered the low door-way of the turret-room, and had no sooner established his thick-soled boots upon the floor, than he made an obeisance to the Earl, with his cap under his arm.

"What hath brought thee hither so early, friend Rory?" inquired the Earl.

"In good sooth, my noble Lord, I did think that the Castle mought maybe be lacking provender, wi' a' thay knights, grandees, and lordlings, ilka day in the hall, and so mony o' their people in the kitchen, so I did gather some of the knaves with their horse beasts, and I ha' brought thee ower six fat deer, some wild pollayle, and a dozen or twa o' salmons, to help the buttery-man to fill his spense; 'tis no deaf nits, I rauken, that 'ill fill sae mony mouths."

"I thank thee, Rory," said the Earl; "it was indeed most considerate in thee; thy present is most welcome. How fares it with Alice, thy wife?"

"Fu weil, my Lord Yearl," replied Rory:

"'troth, I see no complaints about the woman. And hows a' wi' my Lady Countess?"

"A little indisposed to-day, Rory," replied the Earl, gravely.

"Fie, fie! I'm sorry for that," said Rory; "I'se warrant feasting and galravaging mun agree but soberly wi' her ladyship's honour. By St Lowry, but I'm no that mokell the better for it mysell when I drink ower deep."

"Too much drink is certainly bad, Rory, though the Countess's indisposition hath nothing of that in it," replied the Earl, smiling: "but a black-jack of ale can do thee but little harm of a morning, so get thee to the kitchen, that thou mayest have thy draught."

"Thanks, my most noble Yearl," cried Rory; "a black-jack full of ale—nay, I spoke of gallons; it will take gallons to gi' me an aching head, I promise thee; nay, one gallon, or twa gallons, peraunter would do me but little harm. But that wasna just a' my business, my Lord: I ha' something mair to speak to thee aboot. Wasn't thee wanting a cast o' hawks?"

"Yea, I did indeed much wish for some of these noble birds, the which our rocks are famed for rearing, good Rory," replied the Earl. "The King hath heard of the excellence of our fal-

cons, and I have promised to send him a cast of them."

"Aweel, aweel, the King's honour shanna want them an I can get a grup o' them," replied Spears; "and sae your Lordship may tell him frae me."

"Thanks, good Rory, for thy zeal," replied the Earl; "get thee then to the kitchen, and have thy morning's draught."

"But that was not just a' that I had to say to thine honourable Lordship," said Rory, still lingering.

"I do opine that thou lackest advice and assistance in some little matter of thine own, friend Rory," said the Earl, smiling.

"Troth, my noble Lord Yearl, thou art not far from the mark there; and yet it's not just mine own matter neither, though some few years mought peraunter ha' made it mine; but it's nobody's now but his who hath got it."

"Nay, now thou art somewhat mystical, Rory," said the Earl; "come to the point at once, I pr'ythee, and effunde thy whole tale distinctly to me, for my time is rather precious this morning."

"The short and the long, then, of this matter, my Lord Yearl, is, that my wife's mother

hath been robbed of fifty broad pieces," replied Rory.

"What! old Elspeth of the Burgh? who can have done so foul a larcen?" demanded the Earl.

"Ay, good my Lord, just our old mother Elspeth," replied Spears. "The money was the hard earnings of her goodman, the smith, who, rest his soul, was a hard-working Christian, as thou mayest remember."

"And how did this wicked stouthrieff happen?" inquired the Earl.

"By the mass, I will tell thee as speedily as may be, my Lord," replied Rory. "It was but the night before last, that is to say the night o' the brenning o' the brugh, that it did happen. The haflins lassie that looketh after old Lucky, was sent out to bring her tidings o' the fire. Thee knawest that the poor soul downa easily budge from eild; and as she did lig in her blankets, she herden a heavy foot in the place; and when she got up, she did find the kist opened, and the old leathern purse with her money gone."

"'Tis a hard case, indeed," said the Earl; "and hast thou any suspicions, Rory?"

"Nay, for a matter o' that, I ha' my own thoughts," replied Rory; "yet I canna say that

I am just sicker anent it; but cannot thou do nought, my noble Earl?"

"Do thou use all thine ingenuity to find out the thief," said the Earl; "I shall see what my people may be able to do to aid thee; and if we discover the rogue, a court shall be summoned, and he shall straightway hang for his villainy."

"Thanks, my good Lord," replied Rory, making his obeisance preparatory to departure; "verily I am much beholden to thee; but an we recover not the broad pieces, we shall gain little by the foiterer's neck being lengthened: yet I'll see what may be done to catch him."

"Do so, Rory," said the Earl; "thou shalt have the aid of some of my people, and I do wish thee success."

CHAPTER XIV.

"So," said Rory Spears to his daughter, as she saw him out into the court-yard of the Castle, previous to his departure, "my lady the Countess hath bid thee attend to a young English damosel, say'st thou?"

"Yea, and she is one of the sweetest, as well as one of the loveliest damosels I did ever behold," replied Katherine, "and of temper and disposition most gentle and sunshiny. Of a truth, it is quite a pleasure to be with her; I am already as if I had known her from infancy. She is so gently condescending with me, that I could live with her for ever."

"What, would'st thou forget thy benefactress to cleave to a stranger?" exclaimed Rory Spears, in a tone of reproach.

"Nay, verily, not so," replied Katherine. "The duty I owe the Countess, and, above all, the love and gratitude I bear her, are too strong to permit me ever to forget her; but whatever my lady wills me to do, I am bound to do; and

I own I do feel grateful to her for laying no more disagreeable task on me than that of attending on one so truly amiable as this English lady."

"English leddy here, or English leddy there, what is ony English leddy, compared to the Countess of Moray?" replied Rory Spears, impatiently. "I like not newfangledness—I like not to see thee relish any one but thy noble mistress, to whom thou should'st ever cleave. She hath made a woman o' thee, for the whilk may the Virgin's blessing be about her. She hath caused thee to be taught many things; but let me not have the grief and vexation to find that thou hast forgotten the plain simple lesson o' hamely virtue, and right acting, and the kindly feelings that I did put into thy young heart when thou wert but as a wild kid o' the craigs, that is, when thou wert my bairn; for, from thy leddy lear and tutoring, thou art now far aboon a simple man like me. Yet doth ane honest warm heart, simple though it be, lift up him that carries it to be the make of the very greatest and wisest among the judges o' the land, and so I am even wi' thee, lassie, and entectled to speak to thee, learned as thou art, and foolish though I be. Let not thy hear dance away after strangers."

"My dearest father, thou hast much misjudged me," replied Katherine. "This lady hath robbed me of no tittle of mine affection for the Earl and Countess, whom I do most ardently love, yea, as second parents; nay, I do love them hardly less than I do my mother and thee."

"Thou should'st love them more, lassie," cried Rory, with great energy and emphasis. "Much as we may have claim to thine affection, what have we done for thee that may equal the bounteous blessings they have conferred?"

"Thou art my father, and Alice is my mother," replied Katherine, seizing his rough horny hands, and looking up in his weather-beaten face and smiling affectionately. "Thou kennest thou didst put notions of virtue and of right acting, yea, and kindly feelings, into my young heart; and do I owe thee nothing for sike gifts?"

"Nay, Kate, thy lear hath made thee an overmatch for me," cried Rory, quite overcome, and, embracing his daughter with the tears pouring over his cheek; "God bless thee, my bairn —I fear not for thy heart; but, by St Lowry, I must away. My blessing rest with thee, Kate. Ho there, loons, hae ye redd your horses o' their burdens?"

"Ou ay, Maister Spears," replied one of the men who came with him.

"Let's on, then," exclaimed he; so, striking the end of his pole to the ground, and whistling shrilly on his dogs, he moved hastily out by the Castle gate at the head of his ragged troop of men and horses.

CHAPTER XV.

The lists were now finished, and the crests and blazoned coat-armour of such knights as meant to tilt were on this day to be mustered in the little chapel of St John's. Chivalry was to be alive in all its gaudy pomp. Hitherto the knights had loitered about idle, or wasted the hours in sighing soft things into the delighted ears of their lady-loves, or in playing with them at chess or tables. Some, indeed, had more actively employed themselves, in hawking or hunting, and others had formed parties at bowls; but now all was to be bustle and busy preparation in the Castle, both with knights and ladies.

By dawn of day, squires, pages, and lacqueys, were seen running in all directions. Armour was observed gleaming in the ruddy beams of the morning sun; proud crests and helms, and nodding plumes, and richly-emblazoned shields and surcoats, and glittering lances, and flaunting banners and pennons, everywhere met the eye.

The Earl of Moray, who had much to direct and to decide on, was compelled to shake off the sombre and distressing thoughts that oppressed him, and even to use his eloquence with the Countess, to induce her to rouse herself from the grief she had been plunged into by the shame her brother, the Wolfe of Badenoch, had brought upon her. She also had important duties to perform; and the first burst of her vexation being now over, she exerted her rational and energetic mind to overcome her feelings, and to prepare for the proper execution of them.

To gratify to the fullest extent that fondness for parade which so powerfully characterized the age, and to render the spectacle as imposing as possible, the whole of the knights, with their respective parties, were ordained to appear in the Castle-yard, where, having been joined by the ladies, it was intended they should be formed into a grand procession, in which they were to ride to the Mead of St John's, to witness the herald's proclamation.

Sir Patrick Hepborne was early astir, and his attendants and horses were all assembled before the Castle-yard began to fill. In the midst of them waved his red pennon, bearing his achievement on a chevron argent, two lions pulling at

a rose. The parade that Mortimer Sang had, with great good judgment, selected for them, was immediately opposite to the window of the apartment which he knew was occupied by Katherine Spears, whose melting eyes had much disturbed his repose, and had created no small turmoil in his bosom. Mortimer yet hoped to win his spurs, in which event, the daughter of Rory Spears, though he was reputed rich, might have hardly, perhaps, been considered a proper match for him. But Master Sang could not resist the fascination of Katherine's talk; and when in her company, he was so wrapped in admiration of her, that he invariably forgot that Rory Spears was her father, or that she had ever had a father at all. The damsel, for her part, looked with inexpressible delight on the soldier-like form of Squire Mortimer, and listened with no less pleasure to his good-natured sallies of humour, graced, as they always were, with much of the polish of travel.

The sound of the trumpets, as the party of each respective knight appeared within the arched gateway of the Castle's outworks, now came more frequent, and the neighing of impatient steeds, provoking one another in proud and joyous challenge, became louder, and the shrill voices of the pursuivants were heard, proclaim-

ing the name, rank, and praises of each chevalier as he appeared. The sun shone out bright and hot, increasing the glitter of the gold-embossed armour of the knights, and the splendour of their embroidered pennons and banners, their richly-emblazoned surcoats, and their horse-furniture, that swept the very ground as the coursers moved.

As Sir Patrick Hepborne passed outwards, in his way to descend to the court-yard, he found the Earl of Moray already upon the terrace, arrayed in all his pride. Behind him stood his standard-bearer, supporting the staff of his banner in an inclined position, so that its broad silk hung down unruffled by a breath of air, displaying on a golden field the three cushions pendant, within a double tressure, flowered and counterflowered with fleurs de lys gules.

"Sir Patrick," said he, "thou art yet in good time. If it so please thee to tarry here with me for some short space, I will endeavour to teach thee some of the names and titles of those gallant chevaliers who are beginning to throng the yard of the Castle below. Thou dost already know my brother, the Earl of Dunbar, who standeth yonder, with his red surcoat covered with argent lions rampant; and I have also made thee know him with whom he holdeth

parlance, who beareth an ostrich proper as his crest, and who hath his surcoat emblazoned gules, with a fess cheque argent and azure, to be the brave Sir David Lindsay of Glenesk, my worthy brother-in-law. With him is the proud Sir Thomas Hay of Errol, Constable of Scotland, who standeth alike sykered to me. Thou seest he beareth as his crest a falcon proper, and the silver cloth of his surcoat is charged with three red escutcheons.

"But see how the noble Douglas's flaming salamander—*jamais arrière*—riseth on the towering crests around him; and as he shifts his place from time to time, thou mayest catch a transient glimpse of the bloody hearts that cover his argent field. Yonder hart's-head erased proper, attired with ten tynes, and bearing the motto, *Veritas vincit*, tells us that the wearer is Sir John de Keith, son of the Knight Marischal of Scotland. His emblazonry is hid from thee at present, but peraunter thou art aware that his coat-armour is argent on a chief or, three pallets gules. Yonder surcoat of cloth of gold with three masdes on a bend azure, as thou mayest have already discovered, veils the armour of Sir John Halyburton, than whom no knight hath a firmer seat in saddle, or a tougher arm to guide his ashen spear. Thou seest, he wear-

eth the red scarf of his lady-love attached to the Moor's head proper, that grinneth as his crest amid the plumes of his helmet."

"I do know him well, my lord," replied Sir Patrick; "it hath pleased him to admit me already into close friendship."

"Ha!" continued the Earl, "seest thou yonder knight, who rideth so gaily into the courtyard, with his casque surmounted by a buck's head couped proper, attired or? He is as brave a chevalier as ever spurred in field—Sir John de Gordon, Lord of Strathbolgy; his azure banner waves behind him, charged with three boars' heads couped or. That knight who beareth for his crest a sleuth-hound proper, collared and leished gules, and whose gold-woven surcoat is charged with three red bars wavy—he, I mean, who now speaketh to the Douglas as he leaneth on his lance—is his brother-in-law, Sir Malcolm Drummond. Next to him stands Sir Alexander Fraser of Cowie, known by his azure coat, and his three cinquefeuilles argent.

"Thou mayest know the Earl of Sutherland by the gravity of his air, as well as by his richly embroidered red surcoat, displaying three stars within a border or, and the double tressure flowered and counterflowered with fleurs-de-lys of the field, marking his descent from King

Robert the First. His helm beareth the cat sejant proper, with the motto, *Sans peur*. Behind him standeth Hugh Fraser, Lord of Lovat, with his crest, a stag's head erased or, armed argent, and his azure coat charged with three argent cinquefeuilles.

"Ha! ha! ha! there thou comest, thou mad wag, Sir William de Dalzell, with thine erect dagger on thy helm, and thy motto, *I dare*. Depardieux, thou mayest well say so, for, by St Andrew, thou wilt dare anything in lists or in field. Thou seest, Sir Patrick, that his sable surcoat hath on it a naked man, with arms extended proper. That lion passant, quardant gules, doth ornament the silver surcoat of Sir Walter Ogilvie of Wester Powrie, Sheriff of Forfar and Angus; and yonder golden coat, with the three red crescents, doth cover the armour of Sir William Seton of Seton. That argent lion rampant is the crest of Sir Robert Bruce of Clackmannan; thou seest his golden coat hath a saltire and chief gules. That crest, a boar's head couped or, marks Sir Gillespick Campbell of Lochow; and the unicorn's head, near it, is that of Sir William Cunninghame of Kilmaurs. My neighbour, Sir Thomas de Kinnaird of Cowbin, is easily known by his red surcoat, bearing a saltire between four golden

crescents. He that holdeth converse with him, and hath three silver buckles on a bend azure on his silver surcoat, is Sir Norman de Leslie of Rothes. Behind him is Sir Murdoch Mackenzie of Kintail; his surcoat is hid from our view, but he beareth, on an azure field, a stag's head embossed or.

"Yonder knight, who rideth in at this moment, clad in a golden surcoat, blazoned with a bend azure, charged with a star of six points between two crescents of the field, is Sir Walter Scott of Rankelburn, as brave a Borderer as ever rode with his lance's point to the South. With him cometh a chevalier whose crest is an erect silver spur winged; he is Sir John de Johnston, one of the guardians of the Western Marches. He who cometh after Sir John, bearing as his crest the bear's-paw holding a scimitar, and who hath his red surcoat charged with a lion rampant holding a crooked scimitar in his dexter paw, is Sir James Scrimgeour, the Constable of Dundee, I wot a right famous knight. With him is a knight also clad in a red surcoat, but having three golden stars; that is Sir Henry Sutherland of Duffus.

"Yonder sable eagle, displayed on the argent surcoat, doth distinguish the gallant Sir Alexander Ramsay, Lord of Dalwolsy; and

that other knight in silver, with the three sable unicorns' heads, is Sir Henry de Preston of Fermartyn. He in the azure—But hark, Sir Patrick, the trumpets sound—the procession is about to be marshalled—we must descend to the court-yard."

The trumpets had no sooner ceased than the voice of a pursuivant was heard.

"Oyez! oyez! oyez!—Let the standard-bearer of each noble and knight take up the parade which the herald did already assign to him, there to remain until he be duly marshalled."

Immediately the banners and pennons, which waved in numbers below, were seen moving in various directions through the crowd, and each became stationary at its fixed point, near the edge of the area of the court-yard. This was a preliminary arrangement, without which the herald would have found great difficulty in executing his duty. As it was, he and his assistants soon began to bring the most beautiful order out of the gay confusion that prevailed. The Earl of Fife, who was to represent the King, appeared, and the Countess of Moray, and all the ladies, gorgeously apparelled in robes of state, came forth from the Castle, and began to mingle their slender and delicate forms with

the firm, muscular, war-proved, and mail-clad figures of the knights.

At length all were marshalled and mounted; the court-yard shook with the shrill clangour of the trumpets and kettle-drums, and the neighing and prancing of the steeds; and the shouts that began to arise from the vulgar thousands, who were impatiently waiting without the walls, announced that their eager eyes were at last gratified with the appearance of the first part of the spectacle.

Forth came some mounted spearmen and bowmen, before whom the dense crowd began slowly to open and divide; and then some half-dozen trumpets, with several kettle-drums and clarions, all riding two and two. These were followed by a troop of pages, also riding in pairs, and after them came a train of esquires, all gallantly mounted and armed, and riding in the same order. Between the pages and the esquires were some kettle-drums and trumpets as before. Then came the Royal Standard, preceded by a strong band of trumpets, kettle-drums, and clarions, and various other martial instruments, and guarded by some of the oldest and noblest of the knights, and such as had no ladies present to claim their attendance. The standard was followed by the Earl

of Fife, who rode a magnificent milk-white charger, armed and barbed at all points, and caparisoned with regal splendour. On the present occasion, he was here acting as representative of the King his father, and the pomp of his array was not inferior to what might have been looked for from a crowned head. Before him rode six pages and six esquires; and eight more pages walked, four on each side of his horse, supporting the poles of a canopy of crimson velvet, covered with golden shields, bearing the lion rampant gules. His golden surcoat, and the drapery of his horse, were richly emblazoned with the rampant red lion, and his private banner that followed bore the full blazon of his arms. The Earl of Fife was attended by a number of elderly knights of noble blood, who acted as his guards.

After the King's representative came the trumpets of the heralds, followed by the pursuivants; immediately after them appeared the heralds, in their crowns and robes; and in the middle of the latter was Albany Herald, his horse led by a page on each side of him. He bore before him, on a crimson velvet cushion, a helmet and sword of rare and curious workmanship, which glittered with gold, and sparkled with precious stones. These were to be the

prize of him who, by universal consent, should best acquit himself in the lists; and the very sight of them called forth loud shouts of applause from the populace. Immediately after the heralds came the marischal and speaker of the lists, attended by the marischal's men.

After these came the Earl and Countess of Moray, richly attired, magnificently mounted, and nobly attended. They were accompanied by the Lord Welles, and his suite of English knights, to whom succeeded the married knights who had ladies present, each riding according to his rank, with his lady by his side, her palfrey being led by a page on foot. Before each chevalier went his banner or his pennon, and he was followed by his esquire, pages, and other attendants. Next came the young or unmarried knights, also marshalled according to their rank, each preceded by his banner or pennon, and followed by his squire and cortège. But these youthful gallants were each bound round the neck with a silken leash, which was held in gentle thrall by the fair hand of a lady, who rode beside him on a palfrey, led by a foot page. It is perhaps unnecessary to mention, that Sir John Halyburton's silken fetters were held by the Lady Jane de Vaux.

After the knights came another train of es-

quires, who were followed by pages and lacqueys; and, lastly, the procession was closed by a considerable force of spearmen, bowmen, and poleaxe-men.

The head of the procession had no sooner appeared through the echoing gateway, than the air was rent with the repeated acclamations of the populace, who formed a dense mass, stretching away from the outworks in one uninterrupted mosaic of heads and faces, until they disappeared beneath the shade of the distant trees of the woodland. The paltry roofs of the cottages in the straggling hamlet were clustered so thick, that they looked like animated heaps of human beings, and the ancient single trees that arose here and there among the hovels, were hung with living fruit. The agitation and commotion of the motley and party-coloured crowd was very great; but it expanded, and consequently thinned itself as the procession moved on, the whole flowing forward like a vast river, until it lost itself in the depths of the forest, where its winding course, and the appearing and disappearing of its various parts among the boles of the trees, with the brilliant though transient gleams produced by the sunbeams, that pierced their way now and then downwards through accidental openings in the

foliage, kindling up the bright lance-heads and helmets, and giving fresh lustre to the vivid colours of the proud heraldic emblazonments, lent an infinite variety of effect to the spectacle.

Whilst they moved over the green sod, under the leafy canopy of the forest, the tramp of the horses was deafened, and the shouts of the populace were in some sort muffled; but when the procession issued forth on the Meads of St John, the affrighted welkin rang again with the repeated and piercing acclamations of a multitude, which went on increasing in numbers as they advanced, particularly after they had crossed the bridge, and even until they reached the lists. The gates and barriers were wide open, and the procession filed in.

The Royal Standard was now hoisted over the crimson-covered central balcony, in which the representative of the Sovereign was afterwards to take his place, and it was hailed with prolonged cheers; while the heralds, pursuivants, marischal and speaker of the lists, and the judges of the field, having stationed themselves on a platform immediately underneath the royal balcony, the procession formed itself into a wide semicircle in front of it. Meanwhile the galleries surrounding the lists were rapidly filled

up by the populace, and all waited the issue with breathless impatience.

The Albany Herald now advanced to the front of the platform, and, holding up the prize-sword and helmet in both hands, there was a flourish of trumpets and kettle-drums, which was drowned by the deafening shouts of the spectators. This had no sooner subsided, than Albany, having commanded silence by means of the shrill voices of his pursuivants, thus began:

"Oyez, oyez, oyez!—All ye princes, lords, barons, knights, esquires, ladies, and gentlemen, be it hereby known to you, that a superb achievement at arms, and a grand and noble tournament, will be held in these lists, within four days from this present time, the acknowledged victor to be rewarded with this helmet and sword, given by the noble and generous John Dunbar Earl of Moray. All ye who intend to tilt at this tournament, are hereby ordained forthwith to lodge your coat-armouries with the heralds, that they may be displayed within the holy chapel of St John the Baptist, and this on pain of not being received at the tournament. And your arms shall be thus: The crest shall be placed on a plate of copper, large enough to contain the whole summit of the helmet; and the said plate shall be covered with a

mantle, whereon shall be blazoned the arms of him who bears it; and on the said mantle, at the top thereof, shall the crest be placed, and around it shall be a wreath of colours, whatsoever it shall please him. Further be it remembered, that on the morning of the fourth day from hence, the arms, banners, and helmets, of all the combatants shall be exposed at their stations; and the speakers shall be present at the place of combat, by ten of the horologe, where and when the arms shall be examined, and approved or rejected, as may be fitting and right. The chevaliers shall then become tenants of the field, and tilt with blunt weapons in pairs, and then the victors shall tilt successively in pairs, until they be reduced and amenused to two; and he of the two who may the best acquit himself, shall receive from the hand of her whom he may proclaim to be the most peerless damsel, the prize of the helmet and sword.—God save King Robert."

The herald's proclamation was received with a flourish of trumpets, clarions, and kettle-drums, and the continued shouts of the people. Silence being at length restored,

"Pursuivant," said he, "stand forth and deliver thee of the rules of the tourney."

The pursuivant obeyed the orders of his su-

perior, and proclaimed the laws of the tourney item by item; after which the trumpets and kettles again sounded, and the shouts of the populace were renewed. When they had died away, the heralds with their attendants again mounted, and then the procession moved round the lists in the order we have already described, and, issuing from the same gate at which it had entered, it proceeded slowly towards the adjacent chapel of St John the Baptist, which it entirely surrounded, and then halting, under the directions of the heralds, it formed a wide circle about the beautiful little gothic building that stood in an open grove of tall ash-trees.

"Oyez, oyez, oyez!" cried a pursuivant, "let the esquires of those chevaliers who mean to tilt at this tournament for the prizes given by the noble and generous John Dunbar Earl of Moray, or who may, in any manner of way, desiderate to challenge others, or to leave open to others the power of challenging them to by-tilting for any other cause whatsoever,—let their esquires now advance, and let the heralds have inspection of their crests and coat-armouries. He who shall fail to comply, and whose crest and coat-armour shall not be up before sunset, shall have no right to enter the lists as a tenant of the field in any manner of way whatsoever,

except always as to poyesor squires, to whom, for this day and to-morrow, the lists shall be open to give all such an opportunity of proving their manhood. Advance, then, ye standard-men and esquires, that ye may deposit the gages which prove your masters to be gentlemen of arms, blood, and descent; that ye may see their trophies erected, and stay and watch each by his master's achievement, to mark whosoever may touch the same, that his knight's honour may not suffer by his neglecting the darreigne."

In obedience to this order, each knight sent his standard-man, and an esquire or page, towards the chapel; and Sir Patrick Hepborne was about to send Mortimer Sang, when that faithful esquire dropped on his knee before him.

"Nay, my good master, I do humbly crave a boon at thy hands," said he; "I do beseech thee let some other of thy people be chosen for this duty, sith I should at least wish to be a free man for this day and to-morrow, that I may do some little matter for mine own honour. By St Andrew, if I may but bestir myself decently, it will not be amiss for thy credit, Sir Knight, seeing that a chevalier, whose personal renommie hath been already established, may be even well enough excused for amusing himself by

taking pleasure in the well-doing of his horse, his hound, or his hawk."

"Friend Mortimer," replied Sir Patrick, "I do much rejoice that thou hast the glorious desire of reaping laurels so strong within thee. Trust me, I shall be no hinderance in thy way to fame, but rather I shall hold fast the ladder, and aid thee to climb and reach it. Thy time shall be thine own, and thou shalt be at full liberty to use thy discretion. I shall be much interested in thy success, and shall have small fear of thy commanding it; so get thee to one of the armourers of the field, and fit thyself forthwith at my cost in whatever thou mayest lack."

The esquire threw himself on one knee, and, kissing his master's hand, warmly expressed his gratitude, and then hastened away towards the lists, to purchase from some of the armourers who had shops there the pieces of which he deemed himself in want, and Hepborne for his part chose out another esquire to fulfil the duty of watching his achievement in the chapel.

The heralds having put everything in such order as might bear inspection, now came forth from the chapel, and marshalling the nobles, knights, and ladies into a foot procession, they led them through the enclosure to the western

door, where they entered to behold the spectacle. The sight was most imposing. Along both sides of the nave, and all the way up to the screen of the choir, were placed stands, each covered by a plate of copper, on which stood the tilting helmet, surmounted by the wreath and crest of the knight. The helmet rested on the upper part of the mantle, so as to support it by the pressure of its weight, whence it was expanded with the lower part of it spread on the ground, in such a manner that the achievement emblazoned on it in dazzling colours was fully stretched before the eye. Behind it, on the right side, stood the squire or page who was appointed to watch it, and on the left stood the standard-bearer, supporting the banner or pennon of his master.

"Advance, ladies, dames, and damosels," cried the herald in a loud voice, that made the groined roof re-echo,—"advance and survey the helmets, crests, and coat-armouries, and see whether thou mayest peraunter descry the bearings of any traitor, malfaitor, or reviler of the ladies; for if so be that such may be discovered, she shall touch his crest, and both it and his achievements shall be thrust hence, that he may have no tilting at this our tournament. Advance, then, and the herald shall descrive them

in succession; and if any other knight or achievement may yet appear this day before sunset, it is hereby reserved to the ladies to exercise their right on him if they see fitting so to do."

The herald now led the knights and ladies in procession up the right side of the nave, around the transept, and returned down the left side of the nave; and having thus given them a general view of the whole, he led them around three times more, during which he accurately described the name and titles of each knight to whom the successive crests and achievements belonged. One or two achievements were touched by some of the younger knights, who wished to prove the firmness of their seat, before the day of tournament, by trial in a by-tilting, with some antagonist of their own selection, or against whom they wished to establish the superior charms of their lady-love; but the more experienced warriors, who had already well proved their lances elsewhere, reserved their efforts for the grand day, when the tournament was properly to begin.

The ceremony of surveying the crests and coat-armouries being now over, the knights and ladies returned to their steeds, palfreys, and attendants, and the whole were soon again in

motion, though not in the order or with the ceremony they had observed in their approach to the lists, and to the Chapel of St John's. The procession was now broken up into parties, and the Earl of Moray and his Countess, leading the way with the Earl of Fife, all followed in gay disorder, with a less chastened pace and less formal air. The ladies had freed their knights from their temporary bonds, though they still held them by the mere influence of their radiant eyes. The laughing Jane de Vaux went on in full enjoyment of her own triumph, and her face reflected the smiles of her merry party, as she cantered joyfully over the Mead after the Earl and Countess of Moray, to partake of a collation spread under a large awning in front of the pavilions on the other side of the river.

Sir Patrick Hepborne's pleasure in this rural feast was damped by the marked distance with which the Countess of Moray now treated him. He fatigued himself with attempts to account for a conduct so different from the kind and easy reception she had given him at first; and he was still more shocked to observe, that even the Earl himself seemed to have adopted somewhat of the same freezing exterior since he had last parted with him in the court-yard. He tried to

persuade himself that it was in a great measure fancy in him, and that in reality it was to be explained by the natural tone of dignity which the day demanded; and with this explanation he was obliged to content himself.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Ha! Signor Andria Martellino, can it be? Do mine eyes deceive me, or is it really thou whom I do thus behold in Scotland?" cried Mortimer Sang, as he entered the temporary shop of an armourer, erected at the back of one end of the lists; "by the mass, I should as soon have looked to see our Holy Father the Pope in these parts, as thee in the Mead of St John's."

The person the squire thus addressed was a tall, thin, shambling, though athletic, black-a-viced-looking man, whose very appearance bespoke his long intimacy with ignited charcoal and sulphureous vapours, and whose stooping shoulders argued a life of bending over the anvil, whilst the length, swing, and sinew of his arms betrayed the power with which he might still be expected to assail the stubborn metal. As Sang spoke to him, he opened a wide mouth from ear to ear, so that the large gold rings that ornamented their pendulous cartila-

ges almost appeared to issue from the corners of it, and replied with a grin of immediate recognition.

"Eh! Signore Mortimero Sang, how I am verri glad to see dee. Dee be verri vell, I do hope. E il votro padrone, il Cavaliere?—Eh! il Cavaliere Seer Pietro Hepborne, I hope he is good?—sta bene?—Preet vell, eh?"

"Yea," replied Sang, "I thank God, he is well; he is here upon the field."

"Ha, ha!" returned the armourer, "Seer Pietro wid dee here? Ha, I glad to hear dat. I glad to see heem. San Lorenzo, he alvays moss good for me. Sempre, sempre mi fa molto bene. He do me more vell dan all de oder Cavalieri in de leest at Paris; he break more shield, more breastplate, more helmet of knight, dan all de oder who did joust. Dite mi, Signore Mortimero, dos he vant anything in my vay? I have moss good armour, all made of right good Milano metal—tutta fabricata nella fabrica mia—all made in my vat dee do call vorksop. Dere, guardate, see vat a preet show. Aha!" continued he, as he opened a door that led from the temporary workshop, where his assistant workmen were labouring at the forge, into an inner place, where there was a grand display

of armour, and weapons of all sorts and sizes, ready for immediate use; "dou mayest see I can feet il Cavaliere Seer Pietro vid anyding dat he may vant in my vay."

"Nay," replied Sang, "I do opine that Sir Patrick lacketh nothing in thy way; he is right well supplied with all necessary gear at present."

"Aha!" said the Italian, "I am verri sorri, verri sorri for dat. I glad to gif him armour for noding at all; he do cause me so moss good vid the vicked blows he do give. Ha! it vas vonder to see heem. I do make armour to stand against the blows of de Diavolo heemself —ma, for Seer Pietro—no; he cut troo anyding. I verri glad to arm heem for noding—si, Signore Mortimero, for noding at all."

"Eh! sayest thou so, Signor Martellino, my master?" exclaimed Sang, with a knowing look: "by the mass, but I am right glad to find thee so liberally disposed, yea, and all the more, too, that thou dost seem to have sike mountance of the very articles I do lack. By St Baldrid, though Sir Patrick hath no need to put thy generosity to the preve in his own proper person, I shall do my best to pleasure thee, and shall strive so far to overcome my delicacy, and to yield me to thy volunde, as to coarct myself

to accept of a helmet and a complete suit of plate from thee on gift."

"Eh, cospetto! no, no, no, Signore Mortimero, mio caro," hastily replied the Italian, starting back, and screwing up his mouth, and shrugging his shoulders; "eh, povero me, quello non posso fare—I not can do dat. Ma, dou not intend vat I do mean. I not do mean dee; but I do mean il Signore Cavaliere Pietro Hepborne, il vostro padrone. It vas heem I do speak about."

"Nay, I do comprehend thee perfectly," answered Sang; "but as it is with my master's money that I must pay for what I may buy from thee, I was in full thought that thou mightest have been filled with jovisaunce thus to discover a mode of showing thy gratitude and regard towards him, by haining his purse, and giving that gratis, the which he must otherwise lay out for so largely."

"Ha! Signore Mortimero caro," said Andria, "ma non m'intendete ancora; dou not intend vat I say yet. Il Signore Cavaliere Pietro Hepborne e voi sono due persone; ha! dou and dy master not von man. I do say (figurativamente) dat I moss glad to arm Seer Pietro, because he do vork moss mischief to de arms of de oder knights, so moss dat he more dan pay

me by vat I sell to dem, for all vat I mote gif him. He do cut out good vork and good sell for me; ma voi siete vat you call an apprentiss in de joost. I give dee good armour! Ha, ha! it vould be all destroy in one leettel momento, and dou voud do leettel harm to dose dat mote be against dee. Ah-ha! dou voud destroy no von man's armour but dine own. Ha! dou hast de good coraggio, and de stout leems; ma, per Baccho, dy skeel is not like dat of dy padrone, Seer Pietro."

"Nay, as to that," said Sang, laughing good-naturedly, "thou mayest be right enow, Signore Andria; yet meseemed that the stream of thy generosity did run best when thou didst ween that no one thirsted. But I am glad to see thee so well provided with good steel plate, from the which I must now supply myself, sith that thou wilt not be generous; and though they be dear, yet of a truth I do ken that thy goods are ever of the best."

"Ah-ha! Signore Sang," answered the Italian, with an air of triumph, "adesso avete ragione—dou art right; a mia armadura è fabbricata d'acciajo stupendissimo de Milano—vat dou voud call de best steel of Milano. Dere is not no von as do vork in vat dou call steel as do know his trade better; ere is no armajuolo is

so good as mine broder and me. Bah! Giacomo dere dost make so moss noise vid his hammaire that I not see myself speak. Com dis vay, Signore Mortimero, com dis vay—com into dis appartamento, and I make dee see all vat do make dee vonder."

"Holy St Andrew, what sort of men dost thou look to meet with in Scotland, when thou dost bring with thee sike armour as that?" cried Sang as he entered, and pointed to an enormous suit of plate armour that hung at one side of the farther wall of the place; "why, that must be intended for a giant."

"Ha, ha, he, he! so dou dost vonder already, Signore Sang," said the Italian; "I did look for dy vonder, but I did not tink so dat I voud see dee vonder for dat; I not tink but dou didst see dat in my store at Paris. I have had him verri long—ma no, I do remember dat 'tis not long since mine broder Giuseppe did bring him from our store at Milano. He and anoder I did sell yesterday morning vas make by mine broder Giuseppe, for de two ends of de store at Milano, for show. Dey look verri preet at de two ends of de appartamento dere, vere we did show de armour for sell. I never tink I sell von or oder, or dat I ever see von man dat mote be big enow to wear dem. But yesterday morning I have de good fortune to meet vid von

Polypheme, who did come to me, vid von mout I fear he did eat me up. He did vant armour. Eh, morte, I do tink I did feet him ven none oder von man in Europe have don it bot mineself. I make him pay vell; ma, ven you see armorers like the broders Martellini—Andria me e Giuseppe, mine broder—de first armorers in the world?"

"True, true," replied Sang, "ye are both mighty men-at-arms, and ye seem to know it as well, too; though, from what I know of ye both, ye do ken better how to make a sword than to use it. But come, we lose time. Hand me down that tilting-helmet, that cuirass, and those vantbraces and cuisses. Let me see, I say, what thou hast got that may fit me for a turn or two in the lists. I must e'en try what I can do, an 'twere only to hack and destroy some steel-plate to win thy favour, and so screw up thy generosity, that I may earn a gratis suit from thee for my prowess one of these days."

"Aha! Signore Sang, den must dou joost wid som von knight dat vear de armour of dat donner Tedesche at de oder end of de leest," cried Martellino, with a sarcastic air of triumph: "dat stupid Meenher Eisenfelsenbroken, dat do pretend to make de armour as good as me. Eh, he! quel bericuocolajo! dat do make his

breastplate of de bread of de gingaire, his vork vill spleet more easy; ma, for dat sell by de Martellini, no, dou not break it so fast, caro Signore Sang."

"Perdie, if I can but meet with that same Polypheme of whom thou didst talk, I will at least try the metal of thy brother Giuseppe's plate."

While the squire was in the act of fitting himself with what he wanted, a new customer came into the front shop or forge, where the armourer's men were working strenuously, with heavy and repeated strokes, at a piece of iron, that glowed at that moment on the anvil. It was Rory Spears.

"Hear ye me, lads," roared he; "will ye haud yere din till I speak?"

The hammers fell thicker and faster, for the men heard him not.

"Dinna ye hear me? Haud yere din, I tell ye, till I effunde three words. Na, the red fiend catch ye, then—devil ane o' ye will stop. Haud ye're din, I tell ye," shouted Rory, at the very top of his voice; but if it had been like that of ten elephants united, it must have had as little effect as that of a weasel amidst such thunder. The furious grimaces and gesticulations that accompanied it were sufficiently visible, and

the iron having now become cold, the men stopped of their own accord, and gave him an opportunity of being heard.

"Ay, by St Lowry, I thought I should gar ye hear at length. See'st thou here, lad," continued he, addressing one of the men in particular, and at the same time holding out to him the strange amphibious weapon he usually carried, "seest thou here, my man? my clipgaud lacketh pointing; try what thou may'st do to sharpen it."

The man understood not his words, but comprehended his signs, and nodded assent; then, pointing to the work they were busy about, he made Rory aware that he must wait until they had finished it.

"Ou ay, weel-a-weel," said Rory, "I'se tarry here till thou be'st ready to do the job;" and, sitting down on a stool, he began peering about with his eyes in all directions.

The door of the inner apartment being open, he sent many a long look through the doorway, as Mortimer Sang and Andria Martellino crossed and recrossed his field of vision. The squire at last appeared, fully armed cap-a-pie.

"Ha!" said he, as he strode forth, well contented with himself, "ha! this will do—this will do bravely."

"Ou, Maister Sang, art thou bound for the lists too?" said Rory Spears.

"Hey, Master Spears, art thou there?" replied the squire. "By'r lackins, I knew thee not at first. Yea, I am going to try my luck. What! be'st thou bent thither alswa with thy gaudclip?"

"Na, na, not I," replied Rory. "I ha' other fish to fry, I promise thee. I did come here but to get my gaudclip sharpened. As I did sit yestreen watching the salmons coupin at the ess, I did espy an otter creeping over the rock; so I threw my gaud at the brute and speared him, but I broke the point on't, as thou may'st see here. Na, na, I can clip a salmon, or can toss a spear at a rae or red buck i' the forest, or, it may be, at a man in the field; but I kenna about ye're galloping and jousting."

"Signore Martellino, here is thy coin," said Sang, counting it out to him; "but remember thee thou didst owe me half a broad piece in change the last chevisaunce that did pass between us; I do mean that the which thou didst forget to return me in our dealings at Paris, ere thou did'st set out for Milan."

"Ah! signore, non mi ricordo niente di quello," replied Martellino, with a knavish air of pretended forgetfulness.

"Nay, but by St Bartholemew, thou must remember it," said Sang, sternly. "I higgle never for thy price, but I shall have every penny that is lawfully mine own. It was in paying thee for a morrion I had of thee; thou hadst not the change, and thou didst say I should have it next day; but when I did call, thou wert gone to Milan. By St Barnabas, I will have mine own."

"Ah! si, Signore Mortimero," said the Italian, as if suddenly recollecting, and twanging his response obsequiously through his nose, accompanying it at the same time with a profound inclination of his body, "si, avete ragione davvero, I do now remember."

"'Tis well," said Sang, "take this then; I shall now go look for Polypheme. Master Spears, I bid thee good day;" and saying so, he walked out of the forge, and, taking the rein of his steed from the groom that attended him, mounted and rode off towards the chapel of St John's.

As he approached the gate of the inclosure that surrounded it, he observed a countryman holding two sorry ill-equipped hackneys with one hand, and with the other an enormous heavy long-tailed coarse black waggon-horse, covered with saddle and trappings of no small value: yet, unfit as it seemed for tourney, it bore all

the furniture necessary to a steed destined for the lists.

Squire Mortimer dismounted, and, tossing his rein to the groom, hastened into the chapel, to see what new knight had arrived who could own so unseemly a courser. The crowds who had visited the interior to gaze at the achievements of the chevaliers, were by this time all gone to the lists, and the most perfect stillness reigned within the chapel. The pages, esquires, and bannermen, stood by the heraldic trophies of their respective knights, immovable as statues; and the only sound or motion within the place was that of a herald who remained to receive and put up the achievement of any knight who might yet arrive before sunset, and to register his name and titles, and who was at that moment employed in doing these offices for him who called himself the Knight of Cheviot.

This colossal man in armour was standing opposite to the place where his achievement was erecting. On the helmet was a furze-bush, with the motto, "I prick full sore;" and the blazon bore on a field-vert, a mountain azure, with the sun's disk beginning to appear from behind it, or, and the motto, "I shall shine." The gigantic owner was leaning on a spear, the shaft of which looked liker some taper pine-tree of good

growth, than any instrument that mortal might be supposed to wield. The vizor of his bassinet was down, and his face was hid, so that no one could judge of it or know it; but the very shadow that he threw over the length of the pavement of the transept, even until it rose against the wall at the farther end of it, was enough to have daunted the boldest heart. Sang stood patiently, with his arms folded, attentively surveying him, and the achievement that was rearing for him, and no sooner was the arrangement of it completed, than, clutching up the shaft of his lance short in his hand, he bestowed such a thwack with the butt end of it on one cheek of the tilting helmet of the Knight of Cheviot, that he made it sound through the chapel like a bell, till all the squires, pages, and bannermen, started to hear it.

"Who art thou," demanded the huge figure in a hollow and indistinct voice—"who art thou, who thus darest to challenge the Knight of Cheviot to tilt before the day of tourney?"

"I am Mortimer Sang, esquire of the body of the renowned Sir Patrick Hepborne, younger of Hailes," replied he, "and thus may the herald inscribe me, so please him. Achievement have I none at present, but a bold heart, and doughty deeds may yet win me a proud one. I do crave

the boon of a meeting from thee, mighty Knight of Mountains, so soon as the lists may be free for us."

"Am I, a knight, obliged to give ear to the challenge of an esquire?" demanded he of Cheviot.

"Sir Knight," said the herald, "such matches are not without example, both for jousting and outrance. But to-day and to-morrow are set apart for giving license to all esquires and pages of good report, who have fair reason to hope that they may one day win their spurs, that they may challenge whom they list."

"I could have wished some nobler antagonist to begin with," muttered the Knight of Cheviot; "I could have wished that Sir Patrick Hepborne——"

"Dost thou refuse my challenge, then?" demanded Sang, striking the butt end of his lance against the other cheek of the helmet with greater force than before.

The Knight of Cheviot was silent and disturbed for some moments.

"Nay, Sir Knight," said the herald, "thou mayest not well refuse it, without forfeiting all right to tilting at this tourney."

"Then will I accept it," muttered the Knight of Cheviot, after a short silence of seeming he-

sitation. "What! must it be even now, said'st thou?"

"Ay, truly, as soon as the lists are clear for us," replied Sang, coolly; "for I take it some of them are hot at it by this time. I shall look to meet thee there forthwith, and I shall now hasten thither to secure us our turn."

CHAPTER XVII.

The Earl of Moray's sylvan banquet of refreshment was by this time over, the balconies and galleries were already filled with the knights and ladies, and the lists were surrounded by the populace, all eagerly beholding the numerous tilting matches going on between young knights who wished to exercise themselves, and prove each other's strength of arm, adroitness, and firmness of seat, or between squires or pages, who wished to earn their first harvest of fame. The sport had been as yet but indifferent. Most of those who had ridden against each other were novices, who afforded but a poor specimen of what the Scottish chivalry could do. The English knights, and, above all, the Lord Welles, were sneering to each other at the wretchedness of the exhibition, and every now and then throwing out sarcastic remarks against those who were engaged, whenever the occurrence of any slight piece of awk-

wardness gave them an opening for doing so. The Scottish knights who were within ear-shot of what dropped from them, were nettled at what they heard; and had not the sacred character of an ambassador compelled them to keep down their emotions, the Lord Welles, or some of his suite, might have been called on to show, in their own persons, what Englishmen could do; but, circumstanced as they were, none of the members of this diplomatic corps had considered it as necessary to put up his blazon in the chapel of St John's.

"Think'st thou, Courtenay, that there is any chance of men appearing here to-day?" said the Lord Welles, in a voice that showed he little cared who heard him, or what soreness he might occasion. "In my mind, those have been but women and boys who have been tilting for our amusement."

"Depardieux, thou say'st well, my lord," replied Sir Piers Courtenay, "for such woman's play and child's tilting did I never before behold. Our Cheapside shop-boys would make better work on't with their yard-measures. Then is there no fancy in their armour —a crude and barbarous taste, my lord—yea, and a clownish and plebeian air about their very persons, too. Trust me, my lord, I do not

rashly venture on the grave and serious accusation I am now about to hazard, when I do declare solemnly and fervently, that I have not seen one spur of the accurately proper fashion on any knightly heel in these Caledonian wildernesses."

"Ha! ha! ha! The nicety of thy judgment in such matters, Courtenay, is unquestionable," said the Lord Welles, laughing.

A trumpet now sounded from one of the barriers, and was immediately answered from that at the other end of the lists. The voice of a pursuivant was next heard.

"Oyez! oyez! oyez! The good esquire, Mortimer Sang, doth call on the gallant knight of Cheviot to appear to answer his challenge."

There was some delay for a little time, during which all eyes were thrown towards the barrier, where Mortimer was steadily bestriding a superb chesnut charger, with an ease and grace, that might have led the spectators to suppose that the horse and man were but one animal. One of Sir Patrick Hepborne's pages, well mounted, attended him, to do him the necessary offices of the lists; and although his helmet displayed no crest, and that his arms were plain, and his shield without achievement, yet his whole appearance had something command-

ing about it, and all were prepossessed in his favour.

"That looks something like a man," quoth the English knights to each other.

"What a noble-looking presence! If he be only an esquire, of a truth he deserves to be a knight," went round among the spectators.

"How handsome he is, and how gallant-looking and warlike!" whispered the soft voice of Katherine Spears, who stood behind the Countess of Moray.

The pursuivant from Sang's barrier now repeated his challenge; a confused murmur soon afterwards arose from that at the opposite end of the lists, and by and by, the huge bulk of the Knight of Cheviot, mounted on his enormous charger, was seen moving like the mountains he took his name from, through an amazed group of wondering heads. The horse and man seemed to have been made for each other. and they looked like the creatures of a creation altogether different from that of this earth, and as if such inhabitants would have required a larger world than ours to have contained them.

"By'r Lady, but yonder comes no child then," exclaimed Sir Miles Templeton, one of the English knights, who sat behind the Lord Welles.

"By St George, 'tis an animated colossal monument," said the Lord Welles.

"If it be cast down, we cannot choose but have an earthquake," cried Sir Piers Courtenay.

"Who or what can he be?" said Sir John Constable.

"We shall doubtless hear anon," replied the Lord Welles.

"Hath not the brave esquire been rash in selecting so huge a monster for his *coup d'essai* in the lists?" said the Countess of Moray. "To what knight may he be attached?"

"To me, my noble lady," said Sir Patrick Hepborne from a place behind, where he had sat unnoticed by the Countess. "Trust me, he will acquit himself well—his heart is as stout as it is true."

"Say'st thou so, Sir Knight?" said the Countess, turning round and looking at him with some severity. "Then do I give thee joy that thou hast at least one leal heart in thy company."

"Oh, my lady," cried the alarmed Katherine Spears, "Squire Mortimer can never stand against yonder terrible giant. What will become of him? Holy St Andrew protect us, I dare not look."

"Nay, fear thee not, gentle damsel," said Sir Patrick, with assumed composure; "though yonder living tower doth look so big and so threatening, trust me I have no dread for friend Sang. He hath much good thewe and muscle packed into reasonable compass, and they are nerved by a heart withal that nothing can danton. Fear ye not for Sang. By St Baldrid, I begin to feel a stirring interest in this coming shock."

"May the blessed Virgin guard and aid him!" cried Katherine Spears, half covering her eyes.

The pursuivant at the end of the list where the Knight of Cheviot appeared, now responded to him who had given forth the challenge.

"Oyez! oyez! oyez! The gallant Knight of Cheviot is here, and ready to answer the darreigne of the good Squire, Mortimer Sang."

"*Laissez les aller*," cried the herald from the platform under the royal balcony; the trumpet sounded, and the barriers at both ends of the lists were immediately dropped.

The lists, as was very commonly the case in those times, were double; that is to say, they were divided towards the middle, for about two-fourths of their length, by a longitudinal barrier of wood of about four feet high. This was for the purpose of separating the horses of the

combatants from each other, to save them from injury; for each knight, taking a different side of the wooden wall, ran his career close to it, and tilted at his adversary over it, without risk of the steeds meeting in shock, as in the undivided lists.

No sooner were the barriers withdrawn, than Mortimer Sang spurred his courser, sprang forward, and swept along like a whirlwind. The huge animal ridden by the gigantic and ponderous knight of Cheviot, was slow in getting into motion, and came on blowing and snorting, with a heavy lumbering gallop, that shook the very ground. The esquire had already ridden along one half of the wall of division ere his antagonist had reached a third of the distance. His lance was firmly and truly pointed against the immense body that approached, and every eye was intently watching for the issue of a joust that promised to be unexampled in the annals of chivalry. Both steeds were steadily maintaining the line in which each had started. The enormous tilting lance of the knight as it came on, resembled the bolt-sprit of some vessel driven before the wind, and, blunt though it was, the annihilation of the esquire appeared certain to the spectators. The collision was within a few yards of taking

place, when, to the astonishment of all, the knight of Cheviot suddenly dropped his lance, and seizing the bridle of his charger with both hands, exerted all his strength to pull him aside, and succeeded in making him bolt away from the thrust of his opponent. That it was an intentional effort and no accident, was evident to every one. A general hiss, mingled with loud hootings, broke from the balconies and galleries. Mortimer Sang, exasperated at the shameful and cowardly conduct of him on whom he had so sanguinely hoped to prove his prowess, checked the straight course of his horse's career, and, sweeping around in a narrow circle, ran him at the wooden barrier, and leaping him desperately over it, rode furiously, lance in rest, against the dastard Knight of Cheviot, who had hardly yet reined up his steed.

Shouts of applause followed this spirited manœuvre of Sang's. The base knight heard them,—looked around,—beheld the esquire coming, and began immediately to fly towards the gates of the lists. "Halt," cried Mortimer aloud, "halt, thou craven. What! fearest thou a blunt lance? Halt, thou mountain of Cheviot, halt, I say, that I may climb to thine uppermost peak to tweak thee by the nose,

that I may pluck thy prickly crest from thy foggy head, and stick it beneath the tail of the draff-horse that beareth thee;—halt, coward, that I may forthwith blot out thy rising sun, that thou mayest no more dare to shine."

But the Knight of Cheviot stayed not to look behind him. His legs played upon the sides of his horse like some piece of powerful machinery, and he spurred off as if the devil had been after him, the animal exhibiting a pace which no one could have believed was in him. The marshalmen would have stopped him in his way to the gate, but to have essayed to arrest the progress of a huge rock, just parted from the summit of some lofty Alp, and spinning along the plain with all the impetus derived from its descent, could not have been a more irrational or more hopeless attempt, or one more pregnant with certain destruction to those who made it. The way was cleared before him; but the gate was shut. Neither horse nor man seemed to regard the obstruction, however; it appeared as if both were influenced by the same blind fear. They ran against it with so great an impetus, that its strong bars and rails yielded before the shock, and were strewed upon the plain. Away flew the fugitive across the Meads, and on Sang urged furiously

after him. The shouts from the lists were redoubled. Down rushed crowds of the populace from the scaffolds, and away they poured with a hue and cry after the chase.

The flying giant had much the start of Sang, but the superior speed of the squire's well-bred courser was fast lessening this advantage. It was in vain that he attempted to double and wheel, for Sang cutting sharply round, only gained the more on him. He stretched his course straight for the forest, but all saw that he must be speedily overtaken. Sang neared him, and couching his lance, planted himself firmly in his saddle. A single bound of his horse brought him within reach of the knight, and giving him an alert and vigorous push in the rear with his blunt weapon, he threw his unwieldy body forward on his horse's neck, so that, encumbered by the weight, the animal stumbled a step or two, and then losing his fore legs, rolled himself and hurled his rider forward upon the sod.

Ancient Æsop hath told us of a certain tortoise, that, being carried into the clouds by an eagle, was dropped thence on a rock. It is easy to conceive how the various compartments of the creature's natural armour must have been rent from each other by the fall. So it was

with the Knight of Cheviot. The descent of such a mountain was no light matter. Large as his armour was, its various pieces were far from meeting each other over the immense limbs and joints they should have enclosed; and the leathern latchets which laced them together being somewhat aged, they, and even the rivets, gave way with the shock; and the fastenings of the helmet and of the different plates bursting asunder, and there being no shirt of mail beneath them, the Knight of Cheviot lay sprawling among the ruins of his defences, in a black jerkin and hauselines. The active Sang would have been upon him in a trice; but filled with astonishment, he reined up his steed and halted to wonder. Nor was superstitious fear altogether without its influence, in arresting him in his first intention of seizing the dastard impostor, who had thus disgraced the name of knight, as well as the lists in which he had dared to show himself, and of having him dragged to that summary punishment inflicted on such occasions by the laws of chivalry. His eyes stared with an amazement that was almost incredulous of the reality of what they beheld. He whom he saw struggling on the ground was the wizard Ancient Haggerstone Fenwick, whom he had

once accidentally seen at Norham, and of whose supernatural powers he had then heard enough to fill him now with temporary awe, at this his unexpected appearance. Sang raised his own vizor and rubbed his eyes, and when he saw that it was really the face and figure of the Ancient which he beheld, he for a moment suspected that it was some demoniacal trick of enchantment that had been played him to rob him of the fame he had hoped to earn. Rage got the better of every feeling of superstition.

"Ha!" exclaimed he, "be'st thou wizard or devil, I'll wrestle with thee;" and flinging himself from his horse, he strode towards the struggling Knight of Cheviot.

But he was a moment too late. Ere he could reach the wizard, the latter had recovered himself sufficiently to scramble to his legs; and just as the squire was about to lay his fangs upon him, he escaped with a sort of shuffling run, that grew as he proceeded into an awkward strutting gait that might have done honour to a cameleopard; the plates of his armour hanging to his body by frail tags, clattering and jingling as he flew, and spinning off at a tangent from his person, as the thongs successively gave way. The esquire pursued him as fast as he could, but his armour hampered him so much that he had

no chance in a race with one who was loosely attired, and who was every moment lessening his weight, by getting rid of some part of his steel encumbrances.

"Halt, coward," cried Sang, puffing and blowing after him. "Ha, by St Baldrid, 'tis in vain to follow him. An he were the Spirit of the Cheviots himself, who may step thee from one hill-top to another, he could not exert more alacrity of escape. He devoureth whole roods of ground at a stride as he fleeth. By the mass, see him, he courses up yonder bank with his back-piece hanging down behind him rattling like a cannister at the tail of some mongrel hound. Body o' me, how it got atween his legs; would that it had thrown him down. Ha! now it hath lost its hold of him—and now the red fiend may catch him for me, for there he goes into the forest."

The squire returned slowly and sullenly to meet his page, who was by this time coming up. The huge dray horse of the Knight of Cheviot having regained his legs, was standing heaving his enormous sides like a stranded whale.

"'Tis a cruel bite, Archibald Lees," said Mortimer Sang to the page; "'tis a cruel bite, I say, when a man thinketh he hath roused a

lion, to find his game turn out but a stinking pole-cat after all. Get thee after the lurdon, and pick up the pieces of his armour, the which did drop from his scoundrel carcase as he fled."

"Methought, as I chanced to see him casing, that he would turn out to be some such vermin," replied the page, as he proceeded to obey the squire's commands.

Sang sat himself down for a little time to recover his wind, comforting himself with the idea, that he had at least won a trophy of armour that would be valuable from its very rarity.

"I shall have them hung up in mine own tower," said he to himself. "As for the horse, he may fetch as much as may repay Sir Patrick for the advance he hath made for the arms I had of Andria Martellino. By mine honour, he hath a body and limbs that might pull a castle after them. He will sell right speedily to a wainman, ay, and that for a noble price too."

A crowd of the populace now began to approach the place where he was sitting, clamouring as they came along. At their head came Rory Spears, with his fish-clip brandished over his shoulder, and followed by a party of

the marshal's men, bringing along the Italian armourer in custody, whose face exhibited an expression of extreme dismay and trepidation.

"Ay, ay, we shall soon ken whether the rogue speaketh truth or no," cried Spears indignantly. "He saith, if I mistake him not, that Squire Sang knoweth somewhat of the matter. We shall see what he may ha' to say for himsell when he cometh before him. Bring him along there."

"What turmoil is here, I beseech ye, my masters?" demanded Sang.

"Ah! Signor Mortimero," cried the Italian, with a deplorable face of terror; "a—a—ah! It is moss joy for me to see dee; I ask dem to bring me to dee,—dey no ondairestond me; ah, San Lorenzo!—dey do vant to hang me by de naik—dey do accuse me of de steal."

"Well," said Sang with a gruff laugh, as if the attempt at a joke suited but ill with his present vexation and disappointment at the issue of his combat, "by the mass, methinks thou mayest be well enow content to be accused of steel in Scotland, for there lacketh not in Paris those who did boldly affirm, that thou didst employ a much softer metal in thy warlike wares."

"Pah! no, no, no, signore," exclaimed Martellino in extreme distress, "not acciajo, vat dou do call steel van metal,—ma de steal, de rob; dey do accuse me of steal a posse of gold, and as dou art mine verra good friend, I did crave them to bring me to dee."

"Nay," said Sang, "that is in truth a much more serious matter. An that be made out to be truly the case, thy neck will assuredly be stretched, friend Andria, in spite of all that I may do to help thee. But sith thou hast come to me, I swear I shall see that thou hast fair play."

"Oh, Signor Sang, sarai il mio protettore," exclaimed the Italian, with a gleam of hope in his anxious eyes. "All dat I do vant is de play fair. If dou veelt listen to me, I vill make dee ondairestond dat I no steal."

"Nay," said Rory Spears, coming forward, "I have no objection that he should be questioned by Squire Mortimer. St Lowry forbid that he sudna get justice. Gif he be innocent o' the coulpe, and can but make his innocence clear, we sall be saved the trouble o' hooking him up afore the Yearl and his court. It wad be but an evil turn to do a poor foreign deevil, to gar him dree twa or three days jail, whan he hath done naething that may call for

sike a warison. Question him, Maister Sang, question him."

"If I am thus appointed preliminary judge," replied Sang, mounting the dray-horse, "I shall get me on my sack here, that I may sit me at mine ease, and have mine eye on all that passeth in court. Make way there; clear the way for the prisoner," continued he, motioning to the crowd to form a circle round him. "Who hath lost the purse the which he is accused of having taken?" demanded he.

"My wife's mother, auld Elspeth i' the burrows-town," replied Rory, and he hastily recapitulated the meagre particulars he had lately given the Earl of Moray.

"Ha!" said Sang, "and who accuseth Andria Martellino of being the thief?"

"I do dat, mynheer joodch," replied a squat, thick-set, broad-faced, heavy-looking German.

"And who mayest thou be, friend?" asked Sang; "and what mayest thou have to effunde that may throw light upon this affair?"

"Mine name is Hans Eisenfelsenbroken, de grat Yarman, dat mak de armour better nor nobody dat can mak dem so well. I dit see de borse in de hond of dis him here mit mine own eyes."

"A suspicious evidence," said Sang, shaking

his head gravely, "a most suspicious evidence; trust me, I shall tell no store by it without strong corroboration. Hath the prisoner yet been searched?"

"Nay, there hath as yet been no time," replied the marshalmen.

"Let him be forthwith riped, then," said the esquire.

The marshalmen proceeded to execute his orders, and, to the joy of Rory Spears, they very speedily drew forth from beneath his gaberdine, a leathern bag, containing a considerable weight of coin.

"By St Lowry, but that is my auld mother's money-bag," cried Spears, eyeing it from a distance.

"Let me have it," said Sang; "knowest thou thy mother's money-bag by any mark?"

"Yea," replied Spears readily; "it hath E. S. on the twa lugs of it, and a cross on the braid side."

"Of a truth, this is the very bag," said the squire; "the marks are all here."

"Eh! mine Got, did not I tell dee de troot, Mynheer Spears? I do know him to be a tafe. Ha, ha! he will be hanged, and I shall have all de trade mit minesell," cried the rival German

armourer, with a joy which he could not possibly contain.

"Silence, fellow, and respect the court," cried Sang, in a tone of authority. "Canst thou explain how thou hadst this leathern purse, Master Martellino?" continued he. "By St Andrew, if thou canst not, it will go hard with thee."

"Ah, si, signore," replied Martellino, with a face of joy, "de page of dy vorship, de good Signor Lees, he happain to be vid me in my shop at de time after I did sell de great armour to de big gigante, and he did see him give to me de posse of gold dat is dere—van fifty broad piece of gold."

"That is thy mother's sum to a tittle," said Sang, addressing Rory. "But how camest thou to receive so much money from the dastard knave for a suit of armour?" continued he, putting the question to the Italian.

"He did bribe me to give him van of mine vaine horses, dat do carry mine goods," replied the Italian; "and he did give me de posse and de money and all."

Archibald Lees vouched for the truth of all this; and some one in the crowd, who had been in Forres during the fire, had remarked the uncouth and gigantic figure as it glided into the old bedrid woman's house; and having been

struck with the strangeness of its appearance, had particularly remembered its passing speedily out again in great haste. Another remembered that the false knight and his two accomplices had lodged in a house of entertainment next door to Elspeth Spears' house; and it was supposed by many, that they had aided the conflagration, after it was begun by the Wolfe of Badenoch and his party.

All was now clear, and the upright judge proceeded to pronounce his decision.

"Let the money be forthwith told over, and let it, and the bag that holds it, be restored to Master Roderick Spears, as custos thereof for his aged mother. Let the armour, the which hath been gathered piecemeal from the plain, be restored to the rightful owner, Signor Andria Martellino; and let him have our judgment-seat also, sith it doth of right belong to him. I do hereby absolve him from all coulpe. Albeit he is sharp enow in a bargain, verily, I believe he would hardly steal. As for thee, Mynheer Eisenfelsenbroken, I shall only say, that thy zeal to further justice was rather of the eagerest, and mought have been more creditable to thee had not the culprit, against whom thou wert so ready to witness, been thy rival in trade —thy conduct will, doubtless, have its weight

with all good men. And now I dissolve the court," added he, jumping from the dray-horse, and proceeding to mount his own charger, which the page held for him.

The German went grumbling away, disappointed wickedness giving a blacker hue to his swarthy face.

"Ah, Signor Sang," exclaimed the Italian, coming up to him with tears of gratitude in his eyes; "dou hast been mine good friend; dou hast vin dine armour. Here is de money—here is de price dou deedst pay me. Take it back."

"What, fellow," cried Sang jocularly, putting him by; "what, would'st thou bribe the hand of justice? Would'st thou soil that which should be pure? Avoid, I tell thee, avoid;" and putting spurs to his horse, he rode off towards the lists, followed by the cheers of those who had witnessed the scene.

CHAPTER XVIII.

By the time Mortimer Sang returned to the lists, he was disappointed to find that he had no chance left of establishing his reputation that night against a worthier antagonist. The Earl of Fife had already dropped his white wand, and orders had been issued for the clearance of the enclosure and shutting the barriers. The heralds had commanded the banners to be furled, and all were now on the move.

The gay groups of chevaliers and ladies returned from the lists in independent parties, some to the Castle, and others to their pavilions on the field, to prepare for joining the general assemblage at the banquet in the Hall of Randolph. The number of guests who met there at the usual hour was much greater than on any of the former occasions, many knights having arrived during the previous evening or during that day, that they might have their heraldic blazons and trophies put up in the chapel of St John the Baptist, to give them a right to tilt at

the tournament. The Countess of Moray resumed her place beside her lord, at the head of the board. Sir Patrick Hepborne attended the party of the Lady of Dirleton, who, with her lord, showed him an increase of kindness each successive time they met; but when he addressed the Lady Jane de Vaux, she seemed to have put on that frosty and chilling air which had given him so much vexation in the Countess of Moray.

The conversation naturally turned on the exhibition of the day, and was for some time confined to the various private dialogues in which it had sprung up. Praise fell on some few names—Sang's conduct, and his amusing chase, were talked of, with commendation of him, and ridicule of his opponent, the impostor Knight of Cheviot, of whose robbery of the old woman's purse all were now made aware. Some young knights were mentioned with approbation, but the general feeling was, that the exhibition had been poor, and much more was hoped for from to-morrow.

By degrees, the hum of voices that prevailed around the festive board began to subside beneath the interest that was gradually excited by a conversation now arising between the Lord Welles and some of his English knights, on the

one hand, and several of the Scottish chevaliers on the other; and, at last, so deep was the silent attention it produced, that every word of it was heard by all present.

"My Lord Earl of Moray," said the Lord Welles, "I feel much beholden to thee for having persuaded me hither from Scone; for, however tedious and tiresome mought have been the journey, it hath given me an opportunity of satisfying myself and my friends of the unbounded liberality and magnificence of thy hospitality, the which can be surpassed by nothing south of Tweed. But I hope thou wilt take no offence at the plainness of speech and honesty which I use, when I tell thee, that had thy Scottish tilting been all the inducement thou hadst to offer me, I mought have as well staid where I was, as I should, most assuredly, have been but meagrely recompensed for the hardships and deprivations of my long and wearisome pilgrimage, through so large a portion of your trackless Scottish forests and wastes."

"Nay, my Lord Welles," replied the Earl of Moray, "I care not what may have occasioned me the honour of thy presence at Tarnawa: enow for me is the satisfaction of its enjoyment, enhanced as it is by thy gracious reception of what hospitality I may offer thee. Yet of a

truth it erketh me to find that thou hast lacked that pleasure in the survey of the exercises of this day's jousting, the which I had hoped to afford thee. Thou knowest that such meetings of arms are but rare with us in Scotland, and we may not look for that expertness, the which doth distinguish the tournays of more southern climes; yet had I hoped that thou mightest have been in some sort amused."

"Nay, perdie, I said not that I was not amused," cried the Lord Welles with a sarcastic leer—"I said not that I was not amused; for amused I certainly was, and that exceedingly too; but amusement is not what I do ever look for in beholding the exercises of the lists. When I do lack amusement, I do hie me to view the tomblesteers, and those who do practise jonglerie; and indeed I did of a truth see many today who were well fitted for shining among a corps of tumblers; and so I could not choose but be amused, yea even unto laughter, as I did witness the ingenious summersaults they performed. Yet looking, as I am ever accustomed to do, for firm sitting and well-addressed lances in the lists, depardieux, I could not but be disappointed that thou hadst nothing better to show me in behalf of Scottish chivalry."

"Thou knowest, my Lord Welles," said the

Earl calmly, "that these were but the novices in arms, to whom the license of this day and to-morrow is given to exercise themselves withal. Judge not too hastily, I beseech thee, of our Scottish chivalry, of whom thou hast but as yet seen the feeble efforts of the braunchers."

"I should not wish to judge too hastily," replied the Lord Welles, "but if the young falcons show such poor courage of flight, parfoy, I see not great hope of their ever winging well up to the quarry. If thy youthful knighthood of Scotland show not more bravely, depardieux, there is but little chance of much shining metal or skill being displayed among those who have grown tall under such awkward and unseemly practice."

"My most excellent Lord," said Sir Piers Courtenay, following up the speech of his principal,—"my most sweet, excellent, and highly respected Earl of Moray, I must be permitted to add to those remarks, the which it hath pleased the judicious and nicely observant Lord Welles to effunde, that I did, to my inexpressible astonishment and dismay, yea, and almost to the doubting the accuracy of the observation of mine eyes, perceive,—and I hope thou wilt forgive me for thus daring to divulge it, always believing that I do so without meaning offence,

and giving me credence for the entertainment of the most perfect respect and consideration for your Lordship,—I did verily perceive, I say, several grievous outrages on the established rules for the equipment of men and horses, in those who did ride to-day. Three spurs did I observe that were too high set on the heels, by the fourth part of an inch at least; one did I notice of a vile fashion; one bridle-bit was all courbed awry; one dagger was worn nearly, though not quite, an inch two low; divers of the wreaths were ill adjusted on the helmets (the ladies"—bowing round to them as he said so—" will pardon me for adventuring on criticism so nearly affecting them); some of the crests were an inch too high; and, to conclude, there were more than one surcoat ill cut. Now, I do crave thy permission to remark, most potent Earl, that he who doth neglect these highly essential, though minute points of chivalry, cannot be expected to excel in the greater and more obvious."

" I do hope, my noble Earl of Moray," said Sir William de Dalzell roguishly—" I do hope that thou wilt exert thy power and thine influence over the young and rising sprigs of Scottish chivalry, that they may arm themselves more en regle; but, that they may strict-

ly and correctly do so, it doth behove thee to hunt out and catch that large ensample of good and well-fashioned English knighthood, the which did with such brilliancy grace our Scottish lists this day—he of the Cheviot mountains I do mean, for I am credibly informed that he is of English fabrication; but I trow it will puzzle thee sore to find a Scot, whether knight, esquire, or page, who can run with him; yet ought he nathless to be hunted out, caught, and exhibited for the amelioration of our salvage nation; yea, and after his death he should be speedily embowelled, embalmed, and stuffed; to be set up as a specimen of the rigid and scrupulous accuracy of chivalric arming practised by English knights, to the securing of the improvement of Scottish taste, and the establishment of a purer and more perfect description of it, than hath hitherto prevailed in such matters, to the latest generation."

"Thou dost not call by the glorious name of knight, that impostor, who assumed the character and name for some villainous purpose, and who had the lion's skin torn from his scoundrel carcase?" exclaimed the Lord Welles, with a haughty and indignant air.

"It mattereth not whether he were knight or no," replied Sir William de Dalzell; "of

one thing we are all certain, and that is, that he was an Englishman."

"And are all Englishmen to be judged by the ensample of such a craven as that? one, too, who was hatched on the very borders of Scotland?" replied the Lord Welles, with a slight expression of anger.

"Nay," said Sir David Lindsay of Glenesk, "nay, my good lord, not so; but neither are the deeds of all Scottishmen to be judged by the nerveless essays of a few untaught striplings. I do beseech thee to suspend thy decision as to Scottish tilting until our tournay doth commence, and I do give thee leave to call us gnoffes, if thou wilt, yea, tomblesteers, if so be thou dost then think we deserve any such opprobrious epithets; but if I mistake not, thou shalt see enow to satisfy thee, that thou mayest meet with some in Scotland who may be an overmatch for the best of thine English knights."

"Parfoy, thou goest far, Sir David Lindsay," said the Lord Welles with a sneer; "meseems it thou knowest but little of the mettle of English chivauncie, to talk of it so slightingly."

"Nay, I went not farther than I did intend," replied the Scottish knight; "I trow I have seen good emptying of saddles in my day, and

have encountered knights of all nations, and I am bold to say, that were I to choose my champion, it should not be from England he should be taken, while we have Scotsmen left to afford me good picking. At present, thanks be to God, we have whole armies of knights, any one of whom, so far from provoking an Englishman's mirth, will, by the very mention of his name alone, make any southern chevalier look grave."

"Nay, boast not, Lindsay," said the gallant Douglas, "we can prove enow by deeds to set us above vaunting."

"I vaunt not, my Lord Earl of Douglas," replied Sir David Lindsay; "yet when vaunts are the only weapons used against us, what can a man do?"

"Let words have no place, then," said the Lord Welles, with considerable eagerness, as well as haughtiness of manner—"let words have no place; and if thou knowest not the chivalry and the valiant deeds of Englishmen, appoint me a day and a place where thou listest, and, depardieux, thou shalt have experience to thine edification."

"If it so please thee, then, to wave thy privileges, my lord," quickly rejoined Sir David Lindsay; "if so be, I say, that thou wilt con-

descend to wave thy privileges, and that thou wilt vouchsafe to honour our lists with an exhibition of thy skill and nerve, by St Andrew I will gladly meet thee to-morrow; yea, or if thou should'st wish to eschew the encounter in thine own sacred person, of a truth I shall be well contented to take whichsoever of thy companions thou may'st be pleased to assign me. We shall at least be sure that the appearance of one English knight in the lists shall give a zest to the jousting, which to-day's exhibition did so meagrely supply."

"I do beseech thee, my noble and most fair lord," said Sir Piers Courtenay to the Lord Welles—"I do beseech thee, let me be the supremely felicitous knight, who may appear under the banner of St George, to combat in honour of England."

"Nay, Courtenay," said the Lord Welles, "I can neither resign to thee the right I have obtained to the gallant Sir David Lindsay, nor can I submit to tilt now; but if Sir David will indulge me so far as to name some other time and place, verily, I shall pledge myself to give him the meeting, yea, and that, too, with as much good-will as he can wish for it."

"By the mass, I care not though thou dost make the meeting in England, or even in Lon-

don itself," said Sir David Lindsay. "Let me have a safe-conduct from the English King for myself and party, and I will not scruple to ride, yea, even to the farthermost point of thy southern soil, in search of an antagonist so desirable."

"Let it be on London bridge, then," said the Lord Welles.

"On London bridge!" muttered a number of the Scottish knights, as if they thought that it was but hardly liberal in the English noble to close so narrowly with the wide proposal of their champion.

"Yea, on London bridge, or in thine own garden, if it so listeth thee, my Lord Welles," replied the stanch Sir David, without attending to the ejaculations of his friends. "Let us not delay to record the conditions."

"My word is enow for this night, I do trust," replied the Lord Welles, rising and offering his hand across the table to Sir David Lindsay, who took it in the most friendly manner. "To-morrow we may have the terms properly drawn up at greater leisure."

"So then, 'tis as it should be," said the Earl of Moray. "Let a brimming goblet be filled. I drink to the health of the Lord Welles, and the health of Sir David Lindsay of Glenesk,

and let both names float together in friendly guise on the same mantling mazer."

This double health was received with loud acclamations by all, and the goblets circulated briskly to do honour to it.

CHAPTER XIX.

The health had hardly well gone round, ere the shrill notes of a bugle were heard, followed by a stir that arose in the court-yard, the noise of which even reached the ears of those in the hall. A messenger had arrived express, and a letter was speedily delivered to the Earl of Fife.

"Ha!" said he, with an air of surprise, as he surveyed the impression of the signet attached to the purple silk in which it was wrapped; and then hastily breaking it open, glanced rapidly over its contents.

All eyes were turned towards him with eager inquiry. An expression of earnest attention to what he read was very visibly marked on his features.

"Your pardon, brother," said he, starting up at length, after a moment's thought; "I crave your pardon, and that of this honourable company, but this letter is from my royal father,

and on pressing state affairs. I must of needs-cost break up the banquet sooner than thy wonted hospitality would authorize me to demand of thee, were the business of a less urgent nature; but we must hold a council straightway, to determine how we may best and most speedily fulfil the wishes of his Majesty. I shall wait thy coming in thy private apartment, and shall by and by hope for the attendance of such of the nobles and knights here assembled, as may be required to aid our resolves."

Having said so, the Earl of Fife bowed graciously to the company, with such a sweeping, yet particularizing glance, as left each individual in the firm belief, that he had been especially distinguished by the great man's notice; and putting his hand into his bosom, he moved down the hall, with all the appearance of being instantly absorbed in deep reflection.

The Lord Welles, and his suite of English knights, darting very significant looks towards one another, sat a few minutes, and then rising retired in a body. The Countess of Moray, and the rest of the ladies, also soon afterwards left the board, and sought their apartments, and the Earl of Moray instantly broke

up the banquet, and hastened to join his brother the Earl of Fife, taking with him the Earl of Douglas and the Earl of Dunbar. Such of the Scottish nobles and knights, however, as conceived that their presence might be required at the expected council, continued to pace the ample pavement in small parties, or to stand grouped together in little knots, all exercising their ingenuity in guessing at the probable cause and nature of so sudden and unlooked-for, and apparently so important a communication. The most prevalent surmise was, that a war with England was to be declared, and the very thought of such a thing gave joy to every manly bosom. Suspicions of the prospect of a rupture between the two countries had begun to be pretty general of late; and the circumstance of bringing down the English ambassadors to Tarnawa, was by some, who affected to be deeper read in such matters than others, interpreted into a fine piece of state policy, to keep them out of the way, while preparations were maturing for the more powerful and successful commencement of hostilities on the part of Scotland. All were impatient to know the truth, and when a messenger came to the door of the hall with a roll of names, which he read over, calling on those of the nobles and knights,

who were named in it, to remain in the hall, and take their places at the board, at the upper end of it, according to their rank, those who were so selected could not well hide their satisfaction, while those who were compelled to withdraw did so with extreme reluctance.

Sir Patrick Hepborne was overjoyed to find that he was to be one of those in whom the Earl of Fife wished to confide. He took his seat at the table with the rest, and the most profound silence succeeded to the sounds of mirth and pleasure, which had so lately reigned within the hall. Whatever conjectures might have escaped the lips of those around the board, whilst they mingled carelessly with those who were idly speculating on the probable purport of the King's message, they now considered the seal of silence imposed on their lips, by their being selected as councillors; and accordingly they sat gazing at each other, with grave and solemn looks, calmly awaiting the arrival of the Earl of Fife. Certain faces there were, which betrayed something like a consciousness of greater self-importance than the rest, as if they either knew, or would have had others believe that they knew, something more than those around them. But whatever they knew or thought, they ventured not to express it.

At length the Earls of Fife, Moray, Douglas, and Dunbar, appeared, and took their seats at the upper end of the table. All eyes and ears were fixed in attention; and the Earl of Fife, laying the King's letter and packet on the table, began to open the business he had to communicate to them.

"My lords and gentlemen," said he, in a tone of voice, which, though audible enough to every one of them, was yet too low to have found its way through any of the crannies of the door at the farther end of the hall, "I shall be as brief as possible with you. Ye all know how great is my consideration for you individually, so I trust that I have no need to waste time in assuring ye of my love for ye all, or of the zeal with which I am filled for promoting your respective interests. Highly sensible am I of the great blessing that hath befallen Scotland, in raising up such store of wisdom and valour among her sons, as I do know to exist in the persons of the noble lords and honourable knights by whom I have now the felicity of being surrounded; and I do the more congratulate myself upon this knowledge at the present time, seeing that the wisdom and the valour I have spoken of must now be called forth into important action. For, to withhold the news from you no longer,

Scotland is about to be, nay, more probably hath been already invaded,—a large army having hovered on the Eastern Marches, threatening the Merse with fire and sword, the which may have ere this been poured out upon them. Your good King, and my royal father, hath sent this intelligence express from Aberdeen, where he now abideth, at the same time commanding our instant attendance there, to counsel and advise him, and to receive his orders for our future conduct. We are, moreover, directed to lead thither with us all the strength of dependants we can muster, and to take such immediate measures as may ensure the instant gathering of those districts which are under the control of each of us respectively. A large force must of needscost be quickly got together; it is therefore highly expedient that our vassals should be forthcoming with as little delay as possible, that they may be ready to unite themselves with the host wheresoever and whensoever it may assemble. Such of us as are wanted at Aberdeen must set forward to-morrow. These, then, are the matters and the commands which my royal father sends you, and which I, as his organ, have been instructed to convey to you."

A murmur of applause ran around the table. Broken sentences burst from the respective

knights, each shortly but pithily expressing the satisfaction he felt at the prospect of having something more serious than jousting to occupy him.

"I have yet one more communication to make, my lords and gentlemen, of which you must be the witnesses, and I need not say that I entreat you to be the silent witnesses of it. I must convey to the Lord Welles intelligence, which I am not without suspicion he hath been for some time anticipating, from his own private knowledge of events. I mean to crave an immediate conference with him here in your presence; but it is my wish that no one whom I have here admitted to my confidence will talk to him, or any of the English knights, either now or afterwards, of anything I have mentioned. I have to communicate to the Lord Welles the King's license for his departure, and I hope I do not ask too much when I beg that I may be left to do so entirely unassisted, and that nothing he or his shall say may provoke ye to speak. Silence will best accord with your dignity.—Go, brother, my Lord Earl of Moray, so please thee, and entreat the presence of the Lord Welles among us, with such of his suite as he may list to accompany him."

The Earl of Moray hastened to obey his bro-

ther-in-law, and, during his absence, the Earl of Fife seemed to have retreated into his own thoughts. The knights who sat with him remained in still contemplation of him and of one another. The English envoy was received with dignified decorum.

"My Lord Welles," said the Earl of Fife to him after he was seated, "I have now to perform a piece of duty to my King, the which, as it regardeth thee, doth particularly erke me. As thou art thyself aware, I have this night received a letter from his Majesty, and I have now to tell thee, that in it I am commanded to inform thee, that he will dispense with thy further attendance at his royal court. In so far as our personal intercourse hath gone, I have good reason to regret that it is to be discontinued so soon; and the more so, that it hath fallen into my hands to snap it. This parchment, which I have now the honour of presenting to thee, doth contain a safe-conduct for thee, and all with thee, to return into thy native country by the shortest possible route. It doleth me much that we are to be so soon reft of thine agreeable society. Yea, the removal of thy presence is most especially galling at such a time, when all was prepared for making the days of thy stay in Scotland as light as

mought be. Our coming tournay will be naught without thee."

"My Lord of Fife, of a truth this is a most sudden and unlooked-for event," said the Lord Welles, with the appearance, if not with the reality, of surprise on his countenance. "Hath any reason been assigned, the which it may be permitted thee to utter to me?"

"His Majesty's reasons, my good lord, are not always given," replied the Earl of Fife, evasively; "but thou knowest that it is the part of a subject implicitly to obey, without inquiring too curiously into the nature of the wires that may be on the stretch to put him in motion; and I must submit as well as others. Hast thou had no communications lately from thine own court?"

"If thy coming tournay doth ever hold," said the Lord Welles, altogether avoiding the home question of the Earl of Fife, and glancing curiously into the faces of those around him, "it will suffer little in its pomp or circumstance, I trow, from my departure, where thou hast so great an assemblage of Scottish knights to give lustre to it; but if they should be called away, indeed, by anything connected with my dismissal, it may in that case dwindle, peraunter, and expire of very consumption ere it hath been well born."

The Lord Welles's eyes returned from their excursion round the table, without displaying signs of having gathered anything from the firm Scottish countenances they had scanned.

"And when must I of needscost set forward, my lord?" continued the Lord Welles, addressing the Earl of Fife.

"A party of lances will be in waiting tomorrow morning by sunrise, to guide and protect thee on thy way, and I do believe that thou wilt find that sufficient time hath been given thee in the parchment thou hast, to make the journey easy. Shouldst thou, peradventure, covet the provision of anything that may contribute to thy comfort or expedition, the which I may have power to procure for thee, I do beseech thee to let me be informed, and it shall be mine especial care that thou mayst be gratified."

"Nay, my Lord Earl of Fife, I lack nothing," replied the Lord Welles.

"And now, then, my good lord, I bid thee good night," said the Earl of Fife. "Farewell; it will give me joy again to meet with thee as a friend, until when may St George be with thee."

"Receive our fullest thanks for all thy gracious courtesy," replied the Lord Welles.

The Earl of Fife now arose with the Earls

Douglas, Moray, and Dunbar, and took his leave, with many condescending protestations. The Lord Welles and his friends loitered a little time after he was gone, and the Scottish knights having by this time risen from the council-board, he mingled familiarly among them.

"This dismissal of mine is something of the suddenest," said he, in a general kind of manner, to a few of them who were clustered together—"Can any umbrage have been taken? —Is it possible that King Robert can mean to steal a march on his Majesty of England, and cross the Border ere he giveth him warning? or hath he already done so, with an English envoy in his territories?"

He paused after each of these short interrogatories, as if in the hope of fishing out a reply from some one, which might instruct him in the extent of the information that had come from the Scottish monarch; but no one exhibited either the will or the power to gratify him, and he adroitly changed to another subject.

"Ha! Sir David Lindsay," said he, turning round and addressing that knight, "let us not forget to settle the engagement and darreigne that hath passed between us."

"Nay, trust me that shall not I," replied Sir David Lindsay; "I but waited until thou hadst

concluded thy weightier and more pressing affairs, to entreat thee that we may enter into our articles of tilting now. I do hope that nothing may arise to baulk us of our sport."

"What, I beseech thee, can baulk us?" demanded the Lord Welles slyly, and probably with the hope that he would yet catch what he had been angling for, by throwing this long line and drawing it so skilfully round.

"Nay, I know not," replied Sir David Lindsay readily; "thou mightest have repented thee peraunter, and it would have sorely grieved me hadst thou wished to draw thy head from our agreement."

"Depardieux, thou needest be in no dread of that, Sir David; I am not a man of that kidney, I promise thee," hastily replied the Lord Welles, in some degree thrown off his guard by the gentle touch which Lindsay had given to his honour; "for whether it be in war or in peace, thou shalt have a safe-conduct from King Richard, if I have the influence that I do believe I have; yea, a safe-conduct for thee and thine, that thou mayest on thy part fulfil thy behote. Let us straightway hasten to arrange and register the terms of our meeting."

"'Tis well thought of," said Sir David Lindsay; "let us have a clerk to put our mutual

challenge in proper style, and distinct and lasting characters, that, each of us having a copy thereof, neither of us may mistake.

A scrivener was accordingly sent for, and the council-board, again ordained to change the service it was destined to, now became a theatre, where the nicest points of chivalry and the minutest rules of tilting were canvassed, at greater length, and with more eagerness of debate, than had been bestowed on the much more important business which had been previously gone through there. The superfine judgment of Sir Piers Courtenay in such matters was singularly pre-eminent; and his auditors were extremely edified by some long and very learned disquisitions with which he was pleased to favour them. At length everything was happily adjusted to the satisfaction of both parties, and written copies of the terms being signed and exchanged between the two principals in the proposed affair, they cordially shook hands and separated, with many chivalric and courteous speeches to each other.

Things were no sooner settled thus, than several Scottish knights pressed forward to entreat Sir David Lindsay that they might be permitted to bear him company, when the time should be finally fixed. The first of these was Sir Wil-

liam de Dalzell, and another was Sir Patrick Hepborne. To these, and to Sir John Haliburton, Sir David Lindsay readily promised that places should be preserved, however limited a number the safe-conduct might be granted for; but he declined further promises until he could be sure of fulfilling them. The Scottish knights, who had been all too much interested in what was going forward to permit them to leave the hall until everything was finally adjusted, now hastened to call their esquires, and to make those private preparations for travelling which were not publicly to appear until after the departure of the English envoy and his suite.

CHAPTER XX.

The morning had not yet dawned, when the court-yard of the Castle re-echoed to the tramp of the mettled steeds of the Lord Welles and the English knights, and their numerous retinue. The gay caparisons of the men and horses, and the gaudily-embroidered banners they carried, flaunted and fluttered in vain amid the raw, grey, and chilling light that quenched their glittering lustre, and left them but meagrely visible. A body of Scottish lances, commanded by several trusty officers, stood ready to march with them as a guard, and the troop was of such strength as might overawe any undue curiosity they might display, as well as do them honour, or protect them from injury or insolence during their march through Scotland. The Earl of Moray was on foot to do them the parting civilities of a host.

"Forget not London Bridge," cried a loud voice from the window of a high turret that overlooked the court-yard.

The Lord Welles and his knights were already in their saddles. They twisted their necks with some difficulty, so as to have a view upwards, and there they beheld the hairy bosom and sternly-comic features of Sir William de Dalzell, who, in his chemise and bonnet de nuit, had thrust his head and shoulders forth from a window.

"Fear not," cried the Lord Welles; "the meeting shall not fail on the side of England."

"Nor of Scotland neither," replied Dalzell, "if so be that fourfooted beasts can be had to carry our bodies to the muddy banks of thy stinking Thames. I bid thee bon voyage, my lord, though, by St Andrew, I envy thee not thine early morning's march; and so I'll to my couch, and court the gentle influence of Morpheus for some hour or twain, for, contraire to all due course of nature, I see it threatens to snow."

With these words, he threw into the air two large handfuls of feather-downs, and instantly drew himself in. The Lord Welles was half disposed to take the matter up as an insult; but the Earl of Moray, laughing good-humouredly

as the artificial snow descended on the group, soon pacified his excited indignation.

"Nay, mind him not, my lord," said he—"no one among us minds the jest of Sir William de Dalzell; and if we did, perdie, we should gain little by the trial, for we should only bring more of his humorous conceits on our heads. His wit, how rude soever it may seem, hath no meaning of harm or insult in it."

The Earl allowed the Lord Welles and his knights to be some time gone ere he began to summon his people about him, and to issue his orders for an immediate march. Sir William de Dalzell was the first of the Scottish knights, his guests, who appeared armed cap-a-pie in the court-yard, where the bustle of the foregoing morning was soon more than renewed. Two or three hundred good men of the Earl's followers began to assemble, with their horses and arms, in obedience to the summons which had been secretly sent through the population of the district during the night. The rumour of the approaching war spread from mouth to mouth, and rude jokes and laughter followed its propagation, until the joyous clamour, becoming louder and louder, began at last to swell till the welkin was rent with the bursting shouts of the men-at-arms and soldiery, who rejoiced at

the prospect of having something more serious than a tournay to do with.

Sir Patrick Hepborne sprung from his couch, and began to busy himself for his departure. As he moved across the floor his naked foot struck against something that felt like the head of a nail, and was slightly wounded by it. He stooped to ascertain what it was, when, much to his surprise, he discovered a ring, with a beautiful emerald set in it, that had slipped into a crevice between the planks, so as to leave the stone sticking up. He immediately recognised it as having been worn by the page Maurice de Grey. It was beautifully wrought gold, and, after a more minute examination, he discovered some Gothic characters within its circle, which he read thus—

> "Change never,
> But love ever
> Thine Eleanore de Selby."

At the very name of Eleanore de Selby Sir Patrick's heart beat quicker. He had no doubt that the jewel had dropped from the finger of the page, probably the morning he left Tarnawa. He had already resolved to keep it carefully in remembrance of the boy; but the legend seemed to prove it to have been a gift to Maurice de Grey, from his cousin the Lady

Eleanore de Selby; and the conviction that it had once been hers, all unworthy as she was, imparted to it a tenfold value, which he in vain attempted to struggle against. It seemed to have appeared miraculously to warn him never to forget her, and he resolved to treasure it as a relic of one who could never be his.

Meanwhile the court-yard resounded with the neighing of steeds and the din of arms, and the trumpets and bugles were heard to strike shrilly on the Castle walls, till its very turrets seemed to thrill with their hoarse clangour. It was chiefly thronged by some of the same knights, and some of the same esquires, pages, lacqueys, and steeds, whose painted surcoats of a thousand dies, whose armour glittering with gold and gems, and whose gorgeous attire and furniture, had reflected the rays of the sunrise of the previous morning. But the new-born orb of this day looked upon them in another guise. Though by no means devoid of splendour, what they now wore was more adapted for use than for ornament, and their very countenances displayed more of the fury of joy, and had put on an air of greater sternness, that sorted strangely with their uncouth jeers and laughter. The number of spearmen, bowmen, pole-axe-men, and men-at-arms of all

descriptions, was now much larger; and in addition to this variety of the motley crowd, there were several horse litters in attendance, and numerous batt and sumpter horses loading with the lighter baggage, whilst at the Castle gate appeared a small train of wains and wainmen, who were receiving the heavier articles that were to be transported.

One of the most active men in the midst of the bustle was Rory Spears, who, with a morrion on his head, and a back and breast-plate donned instead of his fisherman's coat, was busily occupied assisting in and superintending the loading of the baggage.

"Father," said his daughter Katherine to him, as she at last obtained an opportunity of addressing him, whilst at the same time her eyes wandered to the adjacent spot, where Squire Sang was engaged in getting Sir Patrick Hepborne's party in order; "would I could wend with thee, Father!"

"Hay!" exclaimed Rory, turning suddenly round upon her, and at the same time poising a large package on his broad shoulder, and keeping it there with one hand, whilst with the other he brandished his gaudclip, with singular energy of action; "what ails the lass? Is the wench gane wud, think ye?

Would'st thou to the wars, say'st thou? Na, na, Kate;—the camp be nae fit place for sike like as thee, I trow. What, expose thee, with all thy leddy learning and madame 'haviour, to be the hourly butt for the ribald jests of the guards, and the boozing companions of the sutlering huts! By my fackins, that would be it indeed. Na, na; stay thee at home, lassie, and look to the Countess, and thy new young leddy; ay, and thy mother Alice, and the old woman in the Brugh also; and when I come back, my winsome grouse-pout, I'll bring thee some bonny-waully frae the wars. We shall ha' spulzie to pick and choose amang, I rauckon." So saying, he threw his right arm, gaudclip and all, around his daughter's waist, and kissing her heartily and with much affection, hastened off with his burden.

He was no sooner gone, than Mortimer Sang, seizing one moment from the bustle of his occupation, strode across to where Katherine was standing, gazing in silent, abstracted, and melancholy guise, towards the pile of baggage heaped up on the ground, which her father's powerful arms had been rapidly diminishing. With the corner of her eye she marked the squire's approach; but the fulness of her heart told her that she dared not look up,

lest it should run over. Sang stood for some moments absorbed in contemplation of her, his eyes rapidly feeding his passion, and his passion slowly filling his eyes.

"Mrs Katherine," said he at length, "ahem, Mrs Katherine. Of a truth, it is a bitter and ill-favoured thing to be compelled to part with those with whom we have been happy. Verily, 'twas but yestre'en that you and I were right blithe together, and by this e'en there will be many miles atween us,—ay, and who can tell, for a matter of that, whether it may ever again please Heaven to bring us together for even one such jolly evening—Heigho!"

Katherine could stand this no longer, but giving way to a burst of grief, hid her eyes in her apron, and being too much agitated to speak, and too much shocked at this her involuntary disclosure of her attachment to the squire, she ran off and disappeared into the Castle.

Sang brushed the mists from his eye-lids with the back of his hand, that his eyes might follow the fair vision as it flew. A gothic doorway received it. He heaved up a sigh that rose from the bottom of his heart and again sunk heavily to the abyss whence it was raised, and stood for some moments gazing at

the black void that no longer possessed her figure. Again his eyes were dimmed with moisture, again he cleared them, and again he sighed; and casting one look towards his men, who were standing idle in consequence of his absence, and another to the doorway, he seemed to stand fixed between the equal attractions of duty on the one hand and love on the other. A confused and half-smothered laugh roused him from his dream. It proceeded from the troopers and lacqueys of his party, who were all regarding him, and nodding and winking to each other. Stung with an immediate sense of the ludicrous appearance he must have presented to his men, the balance of his will was overthrown at once, and he sprang off to rate them for their idleness.

"What ho, my masters, meseems as if ye had lost your mainspring, that ye stand so idle. By the bones of the blessed St Baldrid, but I will baste your lazy ribs with my lance-shaft, an ye stand staring in that fashion; by all that is good, I will make kettle-drums of yere bodies. Ha! I'll warrant me I shall alter your music; ay, and change these jokes and that laughter of yours into grinnings that shall make your fortunes at e'er a fair in Christendom. Go to, bestir yourselves, knaves."

And following up this with a few well-directed hints of a more substantial description, laid across the shoulders and backs of those whom he conceived to be most deserving of his chastisement, they were all as busy as ants in a moment.

"Master Spears," said Sang to Rory, as he passed him accidentally, "it erketh me to learn that thou goest not with us."

"Not ganging with thee!" exclaimed Rory, with an expression of countenance partaking partly of surprise at the question, partly of doubt whether it was put seriously or in joke, and partly of the pleased anticipation of the proud triumph he was about to enjoy when he should have breath to pour forth his answer; "not ganging with thee, Master Sang! By St Lowry, but I am at a loss to fortake thy meaning. What would'st thou be at? Dost thou mean to say that I wend not with my Lord the Yearl? If thou dost, by'r lackins, but thou art as sore wide o' the mark as if thou hadst shot blindfold. I'd have thee to know, Sir Squire," continued Rory, raising himself up to his full height, sticking his left arm akimbo, and thrusting out his right to its utmost horizontal extent, his hand at the same time resting on the hook of his gaudclip, the shaft of which was pointed to the earth:

"I'd have thee to know, my most worthy friend Master Mortimer, and be it known to thee, with all the due submission and respect the which I do bear thee, that thy master, Sir Patrick, mought no more take the field withouten thee, than my master, the noble Yearl of Moray, would get into his saddle till he saw me at his back. Trust me, though I cannot ride tilting as thou dost, nor loup barriers, nor gallop after runaway Gogs, Magogs, and Goliahs of Gath, in armour, as thou mayest, I can push as good a thrust with a lance, when I take a grup o't in real earnest, against a chield that may be ettling to do me the like favour, as I can yerk out this same gaudclip i' my hand here, again' rae or an otter beast. Na, na—The Yearl gang to the wars withouten me! No possible."

"Nay, as to its being possible, Master Spears," replied Sang, folding his arms across his breast, with a waggish air, "trust me, I can assure thee of the fact, seeing I did hear the Earl say to his esquire, that thou wert to tarry at Tarnawa, to wait on á young English damsel, who might lack thy protection for a certain journey she hath in contemplation."

"Ha!" exclaimed Spears, who had stood in utter dismay as Sang was speaking; "art thou sikerly assured of what thou sayest, Squire

Mortimer? My faith, things be come to ane queer pass indeed, sin' they are gawin to transmew rough Rory Spears into a squire of dames. They will, nae doot, make a tire-woman of him ere it be lang. But, by my troth, I ken mair aboot mewing of hawks than mutching of maidens, and there is no sweet essence, oil, or unguent to me like the guff o' a wolf, a tod, or a brock. Aweel-aweel, the Yearl's wull sall be my wull; but this I will say, though it may be I should not, that if ever it gaed contraire to the grain wi' me to do his bidding, by St Lowry, now is the very time. But what maun be maun be—that's a' I can say til't." So shouldering his gaudclip, he slowly and sullenly retired into the Castle, his utter disappointment and mortification being but ill concealed by his drooping head, and his hair that hung loose about his face, from under his morrion.

Rory sought his lord, and, notwithstanding the bustle of business in which the Earl was immersed, he succeeded in obtaining an interview with him, when, to his indescribable horror, he discovered that all that Sang had told him was correct. His grudge at his daughter's present service now grew into a dislike to her whom she served, who, besides her crime of being an Englishwoman, no light one in his eyes, had

also to answer for his present humiliation. The Earl paid him some handsome compliments on his fidelity, his good conduct, and his valour, the possession of which qualities had occasioned his selection as the person to be left at Tarnawa, to be in readiness for the honourable and delicate piece of duty which might be perchance required of him. But even these high commendations, from the quarter most valued by him, were insufficient to make amends for the mortification he felt at his disappointment, nor could they season the proposed duty so as to make it palatable to him.

"Aweel-aweel, my Lord Yearl of Moray, thy wull sall be my wull," was all that his lordship could extract from Rory Spears.

After Mortimer Sang had arranged everything about the baggage of his party, and got the men and horses in proper order for the march, he took the opportunity of stealing away from them for a few moments, with the hope of obtaining a sight of Katherine Spears, whom he now discovered to be, even more than he had ever supposed, the ruling magnet of his heart. He found her drowned in tears.

"Fair Katherine," said he, as he approached her with the utmost delicacy and tenderness, "why art thou thus grief-bywoxen? Knowest

thou not that thy father tarrieth with thee at Tarnawa? Dost thou not already know that he goeth not with the host?"

"Yea, Sir Squire," sobbed Katherine, hastily drying her eyes at the sound of his voice, and vainly endeavouring to wipe away all traces of her sorrow; "yea, I did so learn, this morning, from my lady."

"For whom grievest thou then, fair maiden?" demanded Sang. "Surely thou canst not be so oppressed at thoughts of the Earl's departure?"

"Nay, as to that, no," replied the artless girl. "It may be I shall partake in the woe of my Lady Countess. But I weep not for him. Nay, I weep not for any one now."

Mrs Katherine spoke the truth. She certainly did not weep at that particular moment—but the exertion it cost her to restrain her tears becoming much more than she was equal to, their accumulation was too powerful to be withstood, and overwhelming every dam and barrier that maidenly prudence and propriety had raised to confine them, they burst forth more violently than ever, and poor Katherine sobbed aloud as if her heart would have broken. If there were still any remains of resolution about that of the squire, it melted at once, like the snow-wreath

that lies in the direct course of some wide and resistless deluge of waters, which, as it is dissolved, mingles itself with, and swells the very flood that creates its dissolution. He blubbered like an infant.

"Lovely Katherine," said he, sitting down beside her, and taking her hand with the utmost respect and tenderness—"most beauteous Mrs Spears—my loveliest of all damsels, be composed, be comforted, I beseech thee; my dearest Katherine,—my love,—my only love,—be composed, and tell me—ah, tell me, I entreat thee, whether I have any share in these precious drops? Tell me thou weepest for my departure, and those liquid diamonds that fall on my hand will be more prized by me than the purest gems that ever came from the East. Tell me but that I shall carry thy heart with me when I go, and I will leave thee mine in exchange for it, and swear on the honour and faith of a trusty esquire, to be thine, and thine only, for ever. What is glory, what is renown, what is the exalted rank of knighthood itself, without the possession of her we love? Say but that thou wilt love me, sweet Katherine, and, when the war is at an end, I will return to claim thy hand, were it from the uttermost part of the earth.—Say, do my hopes

deceive me, or am I in very truth happy in being beloved by thee?"

Katherine's paroxysm of grief had been partially arrested, almost from the moment that Squire Mortimer had taken her hand so kindly, and begun to speak. She quickly became more composed as he went on; her cheeks became suffused with blushes, and showed beneath her tears like roses after a shower; smiles soon afterwards came, to play over them like the sunbeams over the fresh and fragrant flowers; and, by the time that Mr Sang had finished, the maiden's confusion, rather than her indistinct murmurs, gave the esquire all the satisfaction he could have wished. They swore eternal fidelity to each other, and, after a short and sweet conversation, and an exchange of some little love-tokens had taken place between them, they separated to attend to their respective avocations.

By this time all was in order for the march. Already had several of the nobles and knights departed independently from the Castle; and those who remained, being of the Earl's kinsmen or connexions, were to guide their motions by his. He resolved to begin his journey immediately, being anxious to accomplish several miles of way ere the sun was yet risen to the

height of his fury. The trumpets sounded—the clangour stirred up the hearts of both men and steeds, and they expressed their joy by stunning shouts, and repeated neighings. But their shrill brazen voices were a death-knell to the departing joy of many a soft bosom that sighed within the Castle, and to none more than to that of Katherine Spears. Her nerves were subjected to no fresh trial of resolution, for the esquire's absence from his party, at the moment of starting, would have been inadmissible.

The trumpet brayed aloud, for the third time, its harsh summons, and the court-yard rang, as the mailed horsemen leaped into their steel-cased saddles. The Countess of Moray was on the terrace with her maidens, waving many a sighing farewell to her gallant Lord. The Earl gave the word, and, in company with his brothers-in-law, the Earls of Fife and Caithness,—his brother, the Earl of Dunbar,—the Earl of Douglas, Sir David Lindsay, Sir John Halyburton, the Lord of Dirleton, Sir Patrick Hepborne, and others, he rode forth at the Castle-gate, followed by the whole column of march.

The troops which he headed were but a small portion of those whose attendance he could command as vassals, being only such horsemen as were ever ready to assemble at a moment's no-

tice, to attend him on any sudden emergency. They now served him as a guard of honour in his journey to the King, and the charge of summoning and mustering the great body of his feudal force, and of dispatching them under their proper officers, to join him where he might afterwards direct, was left to his Countess to carry into effect. The cavalcade filed off with a noise like thunder through the gateway, and part of them forming upon the natural glacis beyond, halted until the train of baggage-wains had fallen into the line, immediately in rear of the horse-litters, in which the ladies travelled, and then they closed into the rear of the line of march. The whole moved on slowly through the little hamlet, now silent and deserted, except by its weeping women, its old men, and its children; and then wound into the depth of the forest. An opening among the trees gave them again a view of Tarnawa, and many was the head that turned involuntarily round to look once more at its grey walls, some of them, perhaps, though they little thought so, for the last time.

Sir Patrick lifted up his eyes, raised his beaver, and turned them towards the Castle. He beheld a bevy of white figures grouped together

on a bartizan, and white scarfs or handkerchiefs were waving. He smiled in secret as the imagination crossed him, that the motion of one was like that which had flashed upon his eyes from the keep of Norham. But his fancy had dreamt so, and the vision having been once engendered, continued to haunt him as he rode at the head of his small troop.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Earl of Moray's route led him and his little force through the Meads of St John's. That scene, lately so gay, was now considerably changed. Most of the pavilions on the hither meadow had been struck, and the knights who had occupied them had already left the ground with their people, whilst others waited to join the line of march. The temporary bridge was there to afford them a passage; but the demolition of the lists had been already begun under the superintendance of the pursuivants, and others of the heralds, to whom the property of the materials was an acknowledged perquisite. The inhabitants of the little town of tents and temporary huts were in humming motion, like a hive of bees that are about to swarm. All were preparing to depart with lamentations, their occupation being gone with the tournament that had assembled them; and pack-

horses, and wains, and rude carts without wheels, that were dragged along the ground on the pointed extremities of the shafts projecting behind, were loaded with the utmost expedition.

The street of the burgh presented a different picture. Thither the news of the approaching war had not yet reached, and the townsmen rested with blackened hands and faces from their melancholy work of clearing out the burnt rubbish from the foundations of their houses, to gaze, and wonder, and speculate on the armed force. Loud were the cheers with which they greeted the Earl of Moray, and they were not tired with these manifestations of their gratitude to their generous lord, until they had accompanied him for a considerable way beyond the eastern end of their town. At the distance of some four or five miles from Forres, the Earl halted his men, just where the half-wooded and half-cultivated country gave place to a bare heath of considerable extent, and where the gentle breeze was permitted to come cool and unbroken against their throbbing temples, after they were relieved from the thraldom of their bassinets and morrions; whilst the oaks that fringed the moor, and straggled into it in groups and single trees, enabled them to find sufficient

shade from a now oppressive sun, to eat their morning's meal in comfort.

A pavilion was pitched for the reception of the nobles, knights, and ladies, and after partaking of the refreshment that was provided under it, they wandered forth in parties to waste the time beneath the trees, until the horses should have been fed, and everything prepared for continuing the march. Sir Patrick Hepborne, having fallen into conversation with De Vaux, the old Lord of Dirleton, wandered slowly with him to a clump of trees at some distance, and they sat down together on an old oak that had fallen by natural decay from the little grove of gigantic trees that threw a shade over it. The place was sufficiently retired to promise security from interruption, and Hepborne longed much to obtain from his companion the distressing history, to which he and his lady had alluded, on the evening of their first meeting at Tarnawa. He felt it difficult, however, to hint at a subject, of which he already knew enough to satisfy him, that it could not fail to be productive of painful emotions to his father's old friend, and he would have left it untouched had not accident led to it.

"That blasted moor, where tree grows not," observed the Lord of Dirleton, "and where, as

thou see'st, the stunted heath itself can hardly find food for life, amid the barren sand of which its soil is composed, was cursed into sterility by the infernal cauldron of the Wierd-hags, who, by their hellish incantations, did raise a poisonous marsh-fire to mislead Macbeth; and did so drag him down from the path of honour and virtue, to perish in a sea of crimes, his soul would once have shuddered at. See'st thou yonder huge cairn of stones? Some men say that it marks the very spot where the foul crones first met him, as, with his associate Banquo, he did return victorious from the overthrow of the Danes, who did invade Fife, and whose bravest leaders he sent to eternal repose in St Colme's Isle; it was there, I say, that tradition reporteth they did appear to him, when, with the flattering tongue of the great Tempter, they did salute him Thane of Glammis and of Cawdor, and alswa King hereafter."

"Tell me, I pray thee," said Sir Patrick, "what make these soldiers who do so crowd towards the cairn? Methinks some of them on horseback, and some of them on foot, are riding and running full tilt around it, as if in frolicsome chase of each other."

The Lord of Dirleton was silent for some moments. He sighed, and, much to Sir Pa-

trick's surprise, tears came into his eyes. He was deeply affected for some moments.

"Thou must of needscost marvel, Sir Knight," said he at length, "to see me so much moved by a question, the which is so simple in itself, and the which did fall so naturally from thee. But thy wonder will cease anon. Be it known to thee, that these men do run and ride in that manner, in compliance with a well-received belief, that to surround the cairn with three times three circuits, securely buys the happiness of him who doth so, for the space of three times three months. Peraunter thy marvel will now be enhanced, why I should have wept at the notice of a practice so apparently harmless; but that thine astonishment may forthwith cease, I shall haste me to tell thee the cause of these tears. I am not sorry that I have been led thus accidentally to the subject, sith I did well intend me to effunde into thine ear, at first fitting time, the circumstances of that bereavement, of the which, when I did once before obscurely hint to thee, thou did'st then seem to wish to hear more."

The Lord of Dirleton paused, as if to recollect himself, and, after an effort to master certain feelings that agitated him, he began his narrative:—

"It was about three months after the Lady of Dirleton had happily given birth to her first daughter, that I left her and her baby in full health, and soon afterwards travelled northward into these parts with mine early friend John Dunbar, Earl of Moray. We had been at Lithgow together, at the proclamation of King Robert, and I had yielded to my Lord's wishes, to bear him company for some few days at his Castle of Tarnawa. After a short sojournance in his hospitable hall, I reached this spot on my way homewards, and chancing to halt here, as we do now, I was told of the virtues of the Witch's Cairn. Bethinking me that it was good to secure nine months of happiness at so easy a price, I spurred my horse into a gallop, and began to course around it at full speed.

"I had already encircled it twice three times, and had begun the seventh round, when my horse was suddenly scared by the appearance of a haggard female figure that arose from among the docks and clot leaves in the middle of the heap, and glared fearfully at me. The animal started so unexpectedly aside that he threw me from the saddle, and I lay stunned by the severity of the fall. When my senses returned to me, I found myself in the hands of my people, who were busied about me under a tree. Con-

vinced that it was some supernatural thing that had so strangely crossed me, and put a period to mine attempt to work against fate, I did eagerly demand of those about me what had become of the unsightly witch. All agreed that she had limped slowly away before their eyes until lost in the neighbouring wood; one or two there were who did ween her to be no other than some ancient shepherdess or nerthes-woman, who, wearied with watch, mought liggen her down to rest there, and who had been frayed from her sleep by the sounding tramp of my horse's gallop; but the rest were of my mind, that she was verily some evil witch, whose blasted form and eyne boded some dire malure.

"Sore oppressed with the belief of approaching calamity, I did hie me back to mine own Castle of Dirleton, with a far heavier heart than I had left it, dreading drearily as I went that I should learn some dismal tidings when I should reach thither. But all was well; and as things went not in anywise awry for some time, I began to laugh in secret at mine own apprehensions. Prosperity favoured me, indeed, in a somewhat unusual manner. For six months was I blessed, by a train of good luck so unusual, that hardly a day passed without some happy or favourable occurrence; but this was

the very cause of awakening new fears in me. If, said I, reasoning with myself—if the six withershin circles round the Witch's Cairn have had any influence in producing this marvellous coil of good fortune, what will happen when the spell-thread is unwound to the end, where it was so mysteriously snapped? This seventh moon must be pregnant with some dire affliction.

"I trembled for its approach. It began—several days of it had already stolen away—all was well, and I did again blush for my fears; but, alas! they were but too soon realised. One evening Sarah, the nurse of our infant, was amissing with her charge. It grew late, and the Lady Dirleton became frantic with the most cruel apprehensions. She insisted on accompanying me out to search for the nurse and her babe. The alarm spread, and not only the domestics, but the whole vassals, largely sharing in our affliction, turned out to aid us. All our efforts were in vain, for a dark and stormy night came on; and on that wide plain that stretcheth between the Castle and the sea, there was greater risk of the seekers losing themselves, than chance of their finding the woman and babe. The Lady Dirleton recklessly wandered until she was so sore toil-spent that she was

carried to the Castle almost insensible. I did still continue my search in despair, in defiance of whirlwinds of sand and red glaring flashes of lightning. Faint and distant screams were heard by times ymeint with the blast. We followed in the direction they went in, as well as the mirkness of the night might permit us to do. Sometimes they would bring us down towards the shore of the sea, where they were lost amidst the thunders of its waves rolling furiously in on the beach. Anon we did hear them retreating inland, and we were led by them, in a zig-zag course, hither and thither across the plain, in idle pursuit.—'The child! the babe! —ha, the murderer!—ha, blood, blood, blood! —murder, murder!—the child, the child!'—were the fearful words we caught from time to time, ymingled with wild unearthly cries. Still we followed, and we shouted by times; but our shouts were unheeded, albeit they must nathless have been heard by the person whose voice reached our ears so strongly.

"At length, after a harassing night of fruitless following, the voice died away from us, and we groped wearily and hopelessly about until day did gloomily dawn upon us. We again wandered down towards the shore, and there we descried a female figure, with torn garments and

dishevelled hair, running and leaping about with wild and irrational action among the sand-heaps by the sea side. I thought of the hag of the Witch's Cairn, and my blood curdled within me.

"For some time we followed the figure, but almost with as little success as we had before done in the darkness of night. At length, by making a circuit around her, we came close upon her, where she had seated herself on the top of a little benty hillock. It was Sarah, the nurse of our child. She rose wildly, by fits and starts, and waved her arms high in air, and gave streaming to the wind the infant's sky-blue mantle, the which was red with blood-stains. Her eyes were fixed in vacancy, and she regarded us not as we approached her; but she screamed and shrieked unintelligibly; and again she laughed loud and horribly at intervals. We rushed upon her, and then it was we discovered that reason had been reft from her. Her eyes glared wildly around on us all, but she knew no one, and no syllable could now be extracted from her. It was too clear, alas, that she had murdered mine infant in the sudden frenzy that had seized her!"

"Blessed Virgin protect us!" cried Sir Pa-

trick Hepborne, horror-struck with the Lord of Dirleton's story.

"She was the daughter of an old and much-attached domestic," continued De Vaux, "and she herself devoted to us as a daughter, had loved the infant as her own. Nothing but madness could have driven her to do a deed so horrible. Where she had disposed of the body of the poor innocent we could never discover, though our search for it was unceasing for some days. As for the wretched Sarah, whom God had so visited as to make her no longer accountable for her actions, she was brought back into the Castle, and put under that needful restraint to the which she was subjected for many years thereafter. When she came to be examined more narrowly, some one discovered a dreadful gash on her right hand, as if given by a dagger, a circumstance the which did add to the heap of mystery the truth was buried under, and engendered full many a vague thought and idle surmise. I gave mine orders that some one should be for ever on the watch by Sarah night and day, to catch up anything she might utter in her ravings that might chance to illuminate the darkness that hung over this heartbreaking calamity. But albeit her voice was rarely silent for a moment, being unceasingly poured forth

in elritch screams of laughter when she was in her wildest fits, or in piteous moaning and waymenting when she was low, yet did she rarely mould it into words of meaning. Full oft would she take up in her arms the mantle, the which she had never parted withal, and hush it with sad lullaby, as if the child had been within it; and more than once, when thus employed, she was seen to clasp it in agony to her bosom, to look wildly on vacancy, and to stretch forth her arm, as if dreading the approach of some one, and fleeing into the darksome corner of her cell, she was heard to yell out, 'Murderer!—ha! the babe, the babe!—help, murder!—blood, blood!—my babe!'—and then she would lay open the mantle, and gazing into it with frenzy, would increase her screams to the very cracking of her voice, as if she had but that moment discovered that the infant was gone.

"Thou mayst right well conceive, Sir Patrick," continued the Lord of Dirleton, after a pause, during which he yielded to the emotions so powerfully excited by this recapitulation of the circumstances of this so terrible affliction which had befallen him,—"thou mayst easily imagine, I say, what a deep, nay, fathomless tide of sorrow poured over the souls of the Lady Dirleton and me. We loathed the very air of

the scene tainted by this dreadful tragedy. Anxious to escape from it, we hastened abroad, and strove, by mixing in the society of a new world, to blunt the pangs we suffered from the very souvenaunce of our home. I need say no more, I wis, but to crave thy good pardon, Sir Patrick, for drawing so hugely on thy patience by this long narration, the which I do, nathless, opine, hath not been altogether uninteresting to thee, sith I have observed that thou hast, more than once, showed signs of thy friendly sympathy for our misfortune."

"In truth, my lord, I am deeply affected by thy strange and melancholy history," replied Hepborne. "But what, I pray thee, hath become of Sarah, thy child's nurse, on whom so much mystery doth hang?"

"After many years of confinement, Sarah's wudness did become more tranquil; it seemed as if it was gradually worn out by its own fury. Then did succeed the mantling and stagnant calmness of idiocy—and seeing that she was no longer harmful, she was, by slow degrees, permitted greater license, until at last she was suffered to go about at the freedom of her own will. But will she seemed to have none. Supported by the Lady Dirleton's charity, and tended by her order, she wandered to and fro in the

neighbourhood of the Castle, like a living clod, hardly ever exhibiting even a consciousness of existence."

"And dost thou believe, my Lord," demanded Hepborne, "that the wudness of this poor afflicted wretch did verily work this sad malure to thee? Or didst thou never entertain aught of suspicion of crime against any who were more accountable for their deeds?"

"Ay," replied the Lord of Dirleton, after a pause; "ay, we had suspicions—horrible suspicions. My brother John—that is, my half brother, for he was the son of my father by a woman of low birth and infamous character, who, by sacrifice of virtue, and afterwards by her cunning, did circumvent my father, then an old man, and did induce him to patch up a marriage with her. After the death of my father, she would fain have kept the same place she had done during his life; but as I had just then married me, I could not insult my wife, by the introduction to her notice of a woman so notourly infamous. I nathless did what in prudence I might for my brother, then a young man of some eighteen or twenty winters. I took him under mine own roof, where I in vain endeavoured to bring down his naturally haughty and unbending temper, and to restrain the violence

of his passions. I had shown him an elder brother's kindness from very boyhood, and methought his heart did love me. But his wicked and infamous mother, stung with the disgrace of being refused admittance within our gates, so worked upon his young mind, that she taught him to regard me rather as an enemy than as a benefactor. Forgetful of the anxiety I did ever display for the advancement of his fortunes, and the improvement of his mind, he became impatient of reproof, and ever and anon he was guilty of the most gross and offensive insults to me, and yet more so to the Lady Dirleton, against whom his mother's hatred was more particularly inflamed. Such ungrateful behaviour did naturally beget much unhappy brawling, and high and bitter words often passed between us. At length his daring arose to such height, that he presumed to usher in his impure dam among the noble and honourable guests who assembled to witness the ceremonial baptism of our infant. O'ermastered by rage at the moment, and boiling with indignation, I forgot myself so far as to give him a blow; and I did hound both of them straightway forth with ignominious reproach from my walls. I saw not John ever again—yet had I good cause to fear that he——But hold! my wife and daughter

approach; and, hark! the trumpets do sound for the march."

As the Earls of Moray, Fife, Dunbar, and Douglas, who led the line, were breaking from the oak forest through which they travelled for some time after leaving the halting-place, the proud towers of Elgin rose before them, and the tinkling of many a bell from its various convents and churches, told them that its inhabitants were already aware of their approach. Soon afterwards, the long train of a procession was seen winding down from the entrance of the town, and as they drew nearer, they descried at the head of it the venerable Alexander Barr, bishop of the diocese. He was accompanied by his twenty-two canons secular, and various other members and servants of the Cathedral; and after him came a body of Black Dominican Monks, followed by the Grey Franciscan Friars, all marching in pairs. Ere the warlike body of nobles, and knights, and men-at-arms, had reached the bridge, the procession had halted to receive them. The Bishop, in his episcopal robes, sat patiently waiting them, on a well-fed milk-white palfrey, of sober and staid disposition, suited to his master's habits. The Earl of Moray hastened to dismount, and would have run to assist the Prelate from his horse. But there

was no pride in the old man, and seeing the Earl's intention, he quitted his saddle with an agility hardly to be looked for from one of his years, and, hastening to meet his embrace, bestowed his willing benediction on him, as well as on the Earls of Fife, Dunbar, and Douglas, and those who followed them.

"My Lord Bishop," said the Earl of Fife, "verily I did scarcely look for this good countenance and gentle demeanour from thee, seeing how I am sickered to him who hath wrought the church so much foul wrong. But thou well knowest——"

"Talk not of these matters, my Lord Earl of Fife, I beseech thee," cried the bishop, interrupting him; "talk not of these matters now. We shall have ample leisure to discuss these painful themes ere the hour of couchee. Mount, I beseech thee, and let me now do what honour I may to the son of my King, and to his noble brothers-in-law, the gallant Earls of Douglas and of Moray, by escorting them to the Royal Castle. Thy messengers, my lord," continued he, turning to Lord Moray, "did out-run my tardy hospitality; for ere I gathered tidings of thy coming, or could bestir myself to make fitting provision for thy reception, and for the banqueting of these nobles, knights, and ladies,

thy preparations at the Castle were already largely advanced, else had I assuredly claimed thee and all as my guests."

"Of a truth, we are rather too potent a company to harass thee withal," replied the Earl of Moray; "and, as Constable of the Royal Castle here, it would ill become me to shrink from the fulfilment of its hospitality. Let us mount, then, and hie us thither."

All being again in their saddles, those composing the procession turned their faces towards the town, and began to move slowly onwards. The black crosses on the humble white gowns of the Dominicans or Black Friars, and the grey gown and cowl of the Franciscans—their meek and world-contemning countenances — their bare feet, the soft tread of which gave forth no sound—the humble banner of St Giles, the tutelary saint of the town, who was represented in his pastoral habit, holding a book in his right hand, and a staff in his left, with the motto, "Sic itur ad astra," were all calculated to lead the mind far above the pomps of this vain world, and were strangely contrasted with the fierce and haughty looks of the warriors—their glittering armour—their nodding plumes—the yell of the bugles—and the proudly-blazoned surcoats, and shields, and banners, and pennons,

which flared against the declining sun, as if their glory had been made to endure even beyond that of the blessed luminary itself.

They wound up the steep hill to the Castle, and there the religious orders halted in two lines, facing each other, until the gaudy war-pageant had passed inwards, with all its crashing clangour of instruments, and all its flash and glitter. The holy brethren then moved away in silence, disappearing in succession, like the waves that follow the foaming surges raised on the bosom of a lone lake by the fall of some mountain crag.

But there was one monk of the order of St Francis there, who staid not with his brethren to gaze with lack-lustre eye on the ranks of the warriors as they rode by. Deep excitation seemed suddenly to be awakened in him by some passing object. With an agitated air, he shrouded himself up in his grey cowl; and tightening his girdle of ropes about his loins, he mingled with the ranks of riders, and glided into the Castle.

CHAPTER XXII.

The banquet, though sufficiently splendid, was tempered by moderation, and the guests broke up at an early hour, for the Bishop took an opportunity of signifying his wish to hold private council with the Earls of Fife, Moray, Douglas, and Dunbar, and one or two of the other nobles and knights whom he named. The hint was accordingly taken, and the accommodation of the Castle being too confined for a company so numerous, the Bishop of Moray consigned to the care of his canons the duty of providing fit lodging for such as might be compelled to go into the town. Though the apartments in the houses of these churchmen were small, yet were they most luxuriously furnished, for the times to which this history refers.

As De Vaux, the Lord of Dirleton, was one of the few whom the Bishop requested to aid him with his advice, the former remained for some time at the Castle. His Lady and daugh-

ter were therefore consigned to the care of a rosy-faced tun-bellied canon, who was ready with his attendants to escort them to his antique mansion. As his lacqueys lighted them along under the covered arcades lining both sides of the streets, his gay smiles and gallant air sorted but indifferently with the solemn religious grandeur that was everywhere spread over this ancient episcopal town.

The subject of conference between the Bishop and the nobles, was the late outrages of the Wolfe of Badenoch. The good Bishop was himself incapable of seeking vengeance, in as far as he as a mere man was concerned. But he was zealous for the interests of that religion and of that church of which he was the minister; and being firmly resolved that neither should be insulted with impunity, he stated to the Lords and Knights his determination to go with them to Aberdeen, and to lay the matter before the King. To such a step no objection could be urged by those who heard him, and accordingly, after some conversation on other matters which continued to a pretty late hour, the party broke up.

As the Lord of Dirleton was leaving the Castle, with the intention of finding his way to the house of the canon whither his Lady

and the Lady Jane de Vaux had gone before him, he was suddenly addressed by some one from behind, who, in a distinct but hollow tone, whispered in his ear,—

"Wouldst thou know aught of the fate of thy first-born daughter?"

"Ha! what canst thou tell me?" cried De Vaux, turning round with inconceivable eagerness, and addressing a Franciscan monk who stood behind him shrouded up in his cowl; "speak, I beseech thee, holy man, what hast thou to tell of my first-born daughter?"

"Dismiss thine attendants," replied the Franciscan calmly, "and follow me to the church of the Gray-friars; there shalt thou learn all that I have to tell."

"Get thee to my lodgings," cried the Lord of Dirleton to his people, "and leave me with this holy monk. I would have converse with him alone."

"My Lord," replied his esquire, "it were safer methinks to have thy people about thee; treachery hath many disguises,—there may be danger."

"Talk not to me of danger," cried De Vaux; "leave me, as I do command thee."

The esquire bowed, and retired with the valets and lacqueys who had waited. The monk,

who had stood aloof abiding his determination, now moved away, and the Lord of Dirleton followed him. The streets were deserted and silent, and the Franciscan staid not to speak, but glided so quickly along as to defy all attempts at conversation on the part of the knight who followed him. After threading through some narrow lanes and uncouth passages, the Lord of Dirleton was led by his guide to the door of the church of the Gray-friars, to which the monk applied a large key that hung at his girdle, and after letting himself and the knight in, he again locked it carefully behind him. The interior of the holy place was dimly illumined by the few lamps that were burning here and there before some of the shrines, but the gloomy light was not even sufficient to dissipate the shadows that hung beneath the arch of the groined roof.

"Speak, quickly speak, Father—in charity speak, and satisfy my anxiety," cried the old Lord of Dirleton, panting with the eagerness of expectation, combined with the breathlessness of exertion. "What knowest thou of the fate of my child?—Is she alive?—In mercy speak!"

The Franciscan shot a glance at De Vaux from under his cowl, and then strode slowly

up the nave of the church until he came opposite to a shrine dedicated to an image of the Virgin. There he halted, and, leaning against its iron screen with his back to the lamps, dropped his head on his bosom, and seemed lost in thought for some moments.

"Oh, speak," cried the Lord of Dirleton, following him—"Speak—does my child live? my child Beatrice?"

"Thy child liveth not," murmured the monk, in a deep sepulchral tone; "'tis of her death I would tell thee."

"Alas, alas! I did indeed fear so," cried the Lord of Dirleton, deeply affected. "I had indeed ceased to hope that she might be yet alive. Yet even to know her fate, were something, amid the sad obscurity which hath so long oppressed us. What canst thou tell me of her, holy father?"

"Thou hadst a brother," said the Franciscan, slowly and solemnly.

"Alas, I had. I had indeed a brother," cried De Vaux. "Then are my fears but too just. It was he then who reft me of mine infant. Oh wretch, wretch, how could'st thou be so cruel!"

"It was he," cried the monk, with a peculiar energy of manner, whilst his eyes glared

strangely from beneath his cowl as he spake; "it was thy brother, who, in revenge for the blow he received from thine hand, tore thine infant daughter from her nurse, and fled with her."

"Then may God in his infinite mercy forgive him!" cried De Vaux, clasping his hands together with strong agitation of manner; and dropping on his knees before the shrine of the Virgin, he buried his face in his mantle, and gave way to his emotions.

"What! canst thou in truth forgive him, then?" cried the monk; "canst thou in sincerity pray for his forgiveness in Heaven? Wouldst thou not rather seek revenge against him—revenge, the which may ere long be put within thy power—revenge, to which even I might peradventure help thee?"

"And dost thou, the servant of Christ—thou who shouldst be the messenger of peace—dost thou become a tempter?" cried De Vaux, looking upwards at the monk with astonishment; "dost thou counsel revenge?—dost thou become a pander to the most malignant of human passions, so as to offer thyself to be the instrument who shall drag up my sinful, yet perchance ere this repentant brother, to dree my vengeance?"

"'Tis well," replied the Franciscan coolly; "I did so speak, but to prove thy virtue, the which I do find to be great. Forgiveness is the badge of our Christian faith, which it well becometh thee to wear; and thou hast the jewel in its highest perfection, sith thou canst bring thy mind to forgive him who was the murderer of thy first-born child."

"The murderer of my child!" cried the wretched De Vaux, starting from his knees, and pacing the church, wringing his hands: "Were my worst fears true, then? was my innocent infant, my smiling cherub, was my Beatrice murdered? The few words thou didst let fall had overpowered my first suspicions, and had already engendered hopes that my brother's violence had at least stopped short of a crime so horrible. Murdered, saidst thou? Oh, most foul, most foul! He whom I did love and cherish from boyhood as my son—yea, loved as the issue of my own loins,—in whose nurture I so interested myself, and on whom I did propose to bestow large possessions—What, the flesh of mine own father to murder my helpless babe!"

"Thy forgiveness is indeed of most marvellous and unexampled excellence," cried the Franciscan in a whining tone, the true mean-

ing of which could hardly be interpreted; "wouldst thou, then, that thy brother should be brought before thee, that he may receive full pardon at thy hands for the cruel coulpe he hath committed against thee?"

"Nay, nay, nay," cried the wretched Lord of Dirleton with rapid utterance, "let me not see him—let me not see him. I loved the sight of him once, as the darling son of mine aged father—let me not see him now as the murderer of my child. The taking of the life of my brother cannot now restore that of which he did bereave my Beatrice. As I hope for mercy from on high, so do I forgive him. Let him then live and repent; let him do voluntary penance, that his soul may yet meet with mercy at Heaven's high tribunal; but let me not see him. Had he only robbed me of my child, I mought peraunter have been able to have yielded him my forgiveness face to face; yea, and moreover to have extinguished all animosity by weeping a flood of tears upon his bosom; for verily I am but as a lone and bruised reed, and a brother's returning love were a healing balm worth the purchasing. But the murderer of my child—oh, horrible!—let me not see him."

The Franciscan drew his cowl more completely over his face, and stood for some moments

with his head averted, as if to hide those emotions to which De Vaux's agitation had given rise. Starting suddenly from the position he had taken, he sprang forward a pace or two towards the Lord of Dirleton, and then halted suddenly ere he reached him. De Vaux, wrapped up in his own thoughts, was unconscious of the movement of the monk. He threw himself again on his knees before the shrine of the Virgin, and began offering up sincere but incoherent and unconnected petitions, at one time for the forgiveness of his own sins—at another for the soul of his murdered daughter—and again for mercy and pardon from Heaven for the crimes of his brother. The Franciscan, with his arms crossed over his breast, stood with his body gently bent over the pious supplicant, absorbed in contemplation of him, and deeply moved by the spectacle. A footstep was heard; the Lord of Dirleton's ear caught it too at length, and he arose hastily; but the Franciscan friar with whom he had been holding converse was gone.

"Father," said the knight eagerly to a brother of the convent who now approached him from an inner door, "tell me, I pray thee, who was he of thine order who passed from me but now?"

"Venerable warrior," replied the monk with an air of surprise, "in truth, I saw no one. May the blessing of St Francis be with thee. Peraunter thine orisons hath induced our blessed Lady to send some saint miraculously to comfort thee. Nay, perhaps St Francis himself may have been sent by the Holy Virgin to reward thy piety for thus seeking her shrine at such an hour. Leave me something in charity for our poor convent, and her blessing, as alswa that of St Francis, will assuredly cleave to thee."

"Hath not one of thy brethren loitered in the streets until now?" demanded the Lord of Dirleton.

"Nay," replied the monk, "I this moment left the dormitory, where they are all asleep. Trust me, they are not given to wander in the streets at such an hour as this; and no one else could come hither, seeing that the door of our church is carefully locked at night."

The Lord of Dirleton was lost in thought for some moments; but, recollecting himself, he gave gold to the begging friar, who received it meekly. He then craved the monk's guidance to the house of the canon, where his lady and daughter were lodged; and the holy man, taking a key from his girdle, unfastened the door of the church, and De Vaux silently followed him,

ruminating as he went on the mysterious interview he had had, as well as on the sad story of his murdered daughter, the whole of his affliction for whom had been so strangely and so strongly brought back upon him.

In the morning, the march of the nobles, knights, and men-at-arms, was swelled by the presence of the Bishop of Moray, attended by a large party of his churchmen and followers. The whole body reached the ancient city of Aberdeen early on the fourth day, and Sir Patrick Hepborne had reason to be fully satisfied with the gracious reception he met with from King Robert. He was gladdened by a happy meeting with his father, and with his friend Assueton, who had come to attend on his Majesty.

"How fareth thine excellent mother, Assueton?" demanded Hepborne jocularly; "thou hast doubtless ere this had enough of her good society, as well as of thy home."

"Nay, of a truth, my dearest belami," replied his friend, "parfoy, my conscience doth sorely smite me in that quarter. Verily, I have not yet seen mine excellent mother. Day after day have I been about to hie me to her, to receive her blessing; but something untoward hath ever arisen to detain me; and just as I

was about to accomplish mine intent, I was hurried away hither by the King's command. Perdie, I did never before think that I could have complained of the sudden outbreak of war; yet do I confess that I did in good earnest begrudge this unlooked-for call most bitterly."

"And hath love or filial affection the most to do in exciting thy complaint, thinkest thou?" demanded Hepborne.

"Um! somewhat of both, perhaps," replied Assueton gravely. "By St Andrew, but I am an altered man, Hepborne. Nay, smile not; or rather, if it so pleaseth thee, smile as thou mayest list, for certes I am now case-hardened against thy raillery."

CHAPTER XXIII.

The evening was beautiful, when the loyal inhabitants of Aberdeen, who, by their King's temporary residence among them, were rendered eagerly alive to every little movement regarding him, began to be aware that something was in contemplation, from observing a slender guard of spearmen marching forth from the Castle, and forming in single files at about a yard between each, so as to enclose an extended oblong space on the upper part of the street next to the Castle. The populace began to crowd towards the barrier of spears, in expectation of something interesting, and soon formed a dense mass everywhere behind it. The houses overlooking the spot began to be filled with guests, too, who were glad to claim acquaintance with their inmates, for the sake of procuring places at the windows, which were all of them quickly occupied, as well as every one of those antique and curiously applied outer

stairs and whimsical projections that characterised the city architecture of the period.

Idle speculation became rapidly busy among the anxious gazers. All hoped they were to see the King, yet few thought the hope well founded; for the infirmities of age had so beset his Majesty, that he was but little equal to undergo the labour of the parade attendant on his elevated rank, far less to endure public exhibitions of his person.

All doubt was soon put to an end, however. A distant flourish of trumpets was heard, and martial music followed, swelling and growing upon the ear as it slowly approached from the innermost recesses of the Castle. It burst forth with shriller clangour, and the performers presently issued from the Castle, preceding a grand procession of nobles, knights, and ladies, habited in the most magnificent dresses, followed by a small body of guards, in the midst of whom there was a splendid litter, having the royal arms, surmounted by the crown of Scotland, placed over its velvet canopy. It was borne by twelve esquires, in the richest royal liveries. Murmurs of self-congratulation and joyful greeting began to run around the assemblage of people; but when the litter was set down in the middle of the open space, and Robert II.,

their beloved monarch, the observer of justice, whose ears were ever open to the complaints of his meanest subjects, and of whom it was even commonly said that he never spake word that he performed not—when the good King of Scotland was assisted forth from his conveyance, deafening shouts rent the air, and were prolonged unceasingly, till the lungs of the shouters waxed weary from their exertions.

The cause of the Monarch thus taking the air before his people, was to give confidence to his good citizens of Aberdeen, amidst the exaggerated rumours of invasion, by showing himself so surrounded by his dauntless barons.

The infirm old King, plainly habited in a purple velvet mantle, lined with fur, and purple silk nether garments, with grey woollen hose folded amply over them, for the comfort of his frail limbs, leaning upon his son the Earl of Fife, and partly supported by his much-favoured son-in-law the Earl of Moray, took his broad hat and plume with dignity from his head, and showing his long snowy hair, bowed gracefully around to the people, and then began to walk slowly backwards and forwards, aiding himself partly with his son's arm and partly with a cane, now stopping to converse familiarly with some of the ladies, or of the many no-

bles and knights by whom he was attended, or halting occasionally as if suddenly interested in some person or thing he noticed among the crowd, and then again resuming his walk with all the marks of being perfectly at home among his people. The show, if show it might be called, went not on silently, for ever and anon the enthusiasm of the vulgar getting the better of their awe for majesty, their voices again arose to heaven in one universal and startling peal. The gallant groups of nobles and knights, who, by their numerous attendance on the King, gave strength to the throne in the eyes of the people, were also hailed with gratifying applause; and even some of the more renowned leaders among them were singled out and lauded by the plaudits of the spectators. Among these the Douglas was most prominently distinguished, and the good John Dunbar, Earl of Moray, had his ample share.

How important do the smallest, the most pitifully trifling circumstances of a King's actions, appear in the eyes of his people! All those of his nobles or knights to whom Robert chanced particularly to extend his royal attention, were it but for a minute, were noted by the shrewd observation of the Aberdonienses as among the favoured of the court, and many

a plan was hatched by individuals among the spectators for winning their patronage. Not a movement of his Majesty, not a turn, not a look, escaped remark, and the mightiest results were augured from signs the most insignificant.

It happened that Sir Patrick Hepborne was standing with his father not far from the lower extremity of the open space, when the King came up to them. He had particularly noticed both of them before; and the acclamations of the people, who knew the deeds of the elder knight, and already loved the younger for his father's sake, showed how much their hearts beat in unison with this mark of their Sovereign's approbation. But now the King had something more to say to Sir Patrick the elder, than merely to honour him in the eyes of the people with an appearance of familiarity. He really wanted his advice with regard to the proposed armament, and to have his private opinion of certain matters ere the council should sit. With monarchs, opportunities of private conference with those they would speak to, are difficult to be commanded without remark; their actions, and the actions of those about them, are watched too closely to permit them to be approached without begetting speculation. A politic King is therefore obliged to catch at,

and avail himself of moments for business, which are perhaps but ill suited for it; and it is often in the most crowded assemblage that they run the smallest risk of suspicion of being engaged in anything serious. Robert, leaning on his two attendants, stood unusually long in conference with the Hepbornes. The fatigue and pain which he suffered in his limbs, by being detained in the standing posture for so great a length of time, was sufficiently manifest, from the uneasy lifting and shifting of his feet, though his countenance, full of fire and animation when he spoke himself, and earnestly fixed in attention to what Sir Patrick Hepborne said to him in return, had no expression in it that might have led the spectator to believe that it was at all connected with the frail and vexed limbs that supported it, but which it seemed to have altogether forgotten in the intensity of the interest of the subject under discussion.

While the personages of this group were thus engaged, a considerable movement in that part of the crowd near them, followed by some struggling, and a good many high words, suddenly attracted their notice. A momentary expression of anxiety, if not of fear, crossed the wan features of royalty. The Earl of Moray and the two Hepbornes showed by their mo-

tions, that they were determined to secure the King's safety at the risk of their own lives; for, with resolute countenances, they laid their hands on their swords, and stepped between him and the point from which the danger, if there was any, must come, and to which their eyes were directed. The Earl of Fife acted independently. He made a wheel, which was difficult to be explained, but halted and fronted by the side of his father again, immediately in rear of the Earl of Moray and his two companions. The crowd, within a few yards of them, still continued to heave to and fro as if in labour, and at last a bulky figure appeared in the ancient Highland costume, and, worming his way forward to the line of guards, immediately endeavoured to force a passage through between two of them. The two soldiers joined their spears to each other, and each of them grasped a butt and a point the more effectually to bar his progress. Undismayed by this their resolution, he in an instant put a hand on a shoulder of each of them, and raised himself up with the determined intention of hoisting himself over the obstruction. This action of his, however, was immediately met by a simultaneous and equally decisive measure on the part of the two guards. Just as he had succeeded in

throwing one leg over the impediment, they, by a well-concerted effort, lifted him vigorously up, and horsed him upon the shafts of the coupled spears, amid the laughter of the surrounding populace. After some moments of rueful balancing upon his uneasy and ticklish saddle, during which he seemed to hang in dreadful doubt on which side he was to fall, his large body at last overbalanced itself, and he rolled inwards towards the feet of the King, and those who were standing with him. The whole was the work of a moment.

A loud murmur, mingled with shrieks of "Treason—traitorie," arose among the anxious people; and all bodies, heads, and eyes, were bent towards the scene of action, in dread lest something tragical should follow. The two guards pressed forward to transfix the unceremonious intruder with their spears, as he lay on the ground.

"Back," cried Sir Patrick Hepborne the younger, bestriding his body like a colossus; "back, I say. This man must not be hurt; he means no evil; I will answer for him with my life."

"Secure him at least, Sir Patrick," cried the Earl of Fife.

"My Lord, I will be his security," replied

Sir Patrick. "He is a good and loyal subject, and nothing need be apprehended from him."

"Is he not mad?" demanded Fife, with some anxiety. "Methinks his eye rolls somewhat wildly. By the mass, I like not his look overmuch."

"Be assured, my lord, I well know the man," replied Sir Patrick, stooping to assist him to rise.

"Out fie!" cried Duncan MacErchar, who now stood before them, smoothing down his quelt, and blowing the dust with great care off a new suit of coarse homespun tartan, that, with his rough raw-hide sandals, suited but ill with the splendid sword and baldrick that hung on him, and the richly-jewelled brooch that fastened his plaid; "Och, oich! Sir Patrick—ou ay, ou ay—troth she bes right glad to see her honour again. Uve, uve, ye loons," continued he, addressing the two soldiers who had made so powerful a resistance to his entrance, "an she had kend that ye were going to give her sike an ill-faur'd ride as yon, and sike an ugly fling at the end o't, by St Giles, but she would have crackit yere filthy crowns one again others like two rotten eggs. But oich, is she weel?" cried he, again turning eagerly towards Sir Patrick Hepborne the

younger. "Troth she did hear of the gathering, and so she e'en came down here to see if King Roberts was for the fechts. And oich, she was glad to see her honors again, and the ould mans Sir Patricks yonder; but, uve, uve, she has had a sore tuilzie to get at her."

"I rejoice to see thee, Master MacErchar," said Hepborne, hastily waving him away, under the strong impression of the necessity of ridding the King's presence of him, without a moment's delay; "but the present time and place ill befitteth for such recognition. Retire then, I do beseech thee, and seek me on some other occasion. Thou mayst ask at the Castle-gate for mine esquire Mortimer Sang, whom thou knowest; he will bring thee to me at such time as may be convenient for me."

"Uve, uve!" cried Duncan MacErchar, the warm sparkle gradually forsaking his eye, as Hepborne spoke, leaving him much abashed with a reception, for the coldness of which he had been little prepared; "oit, oit!—ou ay—surely—troth she'll do that. She's not going to plague her honour's honour a moment. She's yede her ways hame again to her nane glen as fast as her legs can carry her. That she will—surely, surely. But, by the blessed mass, had

she but kend that she sould be any hinderance to her honour, she sould not have yalt so far to fartigue her with a sight of her. But she did bid her be sure to claim ken o' her in ony place, and before ony body."

"Yea, I did so," replied Hepborne, vexed to see that he still remained in the King's presence, and rather provoked at his boldness, not being aware that poor Duncan was perfectly ignorant that one of the four persons before him was his Majesty,—"I did indeed bid thee do so; but verily I looked not for thine audacious approach before such eyes."

"And fat was Duncan MacErchar to mind fat other lord-bodies might be standing by, when her father, the noble Sir Patrick Hepborne, and at whose back she used to fight, was before her eyne?" replied the Highlander, a little out of temper. "Uve, uve!—surely, surely, Sir Patrick Hepborne, that did lead her on to the fechts, is mokell more to her than ony lord o' them a',—ay, than King Robert himsell, gin she were here, as she's in yon braw box yonder. Sure she did ken hersell the bonny Earl John Dunbar there, right brave and worthy knight; and feggs she kens that she's not the noblemans that will scorn a poor man. And as for that pretty gentleman, and

that douce discreet auld carl in the purple silken hauselines and the grey hose, they may be as good as him peraunter, but surely, surely, they cannot be better. Na troth, but they must be mokell waur than him, an they would be for clapping their hands on the mouth o' a poor man's gratitudes. But surely, surely," added he, "he be sorry sorry to have angered her honours."

"Thou dost altogether mistake in this matter, Duncan," said Sir Patrick the younger, much distressed to perceive the mutual misunderstanding that existed,—"thou dost altogether mistake; I am not offended."

"Hoot, toot,—ay, ay—ou, ay,—sure," replied Duncan, with a whimsical look of good-natured sarcasm in his countenance. "Troth, she doth see that she's not, neither the one nor the others, the same mans here, on the crowns o' the causey o' Aberdeen, that she was in the glen o' the Dee yonder. Hup up!—Troth, she did take a grup of her hands yonder, ay, and she did moreover drink out of the same cup with her, and a proud mans she did make Duncan MacErchar hersells. But, uve, uve!—she's with her neighbour lords and knights noo, and sike a ragged goat o' the hills as her nanesell, is no to be noticed amang

so many braw frisking sheep, with fine woo on their backs. But sith that she did make Duncan proud, troth she'll show her pride. Fiend a bit o' her will force her nanesell to the kens o' mortal mans; so here's her bonny sword and braw baudrick," continued he, as he tried to take them off, "here's the sword and the baudrick she bore so lightly, but the which ha'e grown of the sudden over heavy for her backs. But the poor Sir Page's bonny broach —och ay! she'll keep it right sickerly, as it was kindly and gratefully gi'en."

"Nay, Duncan, keep the sword and baldrick, I beseech thee, and seek for mine esquire tonight," said Hepborne, much annoyed.

"Hoof, uve, no," replied the Highlander testily. "Sith she careth not to notice poor Duncan MacErchar before her father the ould mans (the Virgin's blessing be on her!) and the good Earl of Moray, and that pretty gentlemans, and yon discreet, well-natured, laughing auld carl in the grey hose and the purple hauselines yonder, troth she'll no seek to trouble her esquire. So here's her sword and baudrick, and she's yede her ways hame again."

"Nay, Duncan, I'll none of them," cried Hepborne, putting them back with the back of

his hand. "Thou art strangely mistaken here. Trust me, mine is not the heart that can use an old friend,—yea, and above all, one that did save my very life, with the coldness that thou dost fancy. But thou art now in the presence of ——————" He stopped, and would have added "of the King;" but at that moment, his Majesty, who had richly enjoyed the scene, as far as it had already gone, gave him such a look as at once showed him it was not his pleasure that it should be so speedily terminated. He went on then differently. "But thou art now in the presence of certain lords, with whom I am deeply engaged in discussing divers matters, of most grave and weighty import, and deeply affecting the well-being of our country and the glory of our King; and of a truth, I well know that thou dost love both over much, to suffer thine own feelings to let, hinder, or do them prejudice in the smallest jot. Thou canst not take offence that I did seem to neglect thee for matters of such moment. By the honour of a knight I will take thee, brave preserver of my life, by the hand," continued he, seizing MacErchar with great cordiality, "I will take thy hand, I say, in the presence of the whole world, yea, an it were in the presence of King Robert himself. And

as for drinking from the same cup with thee, what, have I not drank with thee of the sacred cup of thy hospitality, and thinkest thou I would refuse to drink with thee again? By St Andrew, though rarely given to vinolence, I would rather swill gallons with thee, than that thou shouldst deem me deficient in the smallest hairsbreadth of gratitude to thee for the potent service thou didst render me at the Shelter-Stone of Loch Aven. Put on thy baldrick, man, yea and the sword also, and think not for a moment that I could have been so base as to slight thee."

"Oich-oich!—oot, oot!—uve, uve!—fool she was—fool she was, surely," cried Duncan, at once completely subdued, and very much put out of countenance by these unequivocal expressions of Hepborne's honest and sincere regard for him. "Oit, oit! troth she was foolish, foolish; na, she'll keep the sword, ay, and the bonny baudrick—ay, ay, ou ay, she'll keep them noo till she dies. Uve, uve, she's sore foolish, sore foolish.—Oich-oich, will her honour Sir Patrick pardons her? Troth she's sore ashamed."

"Pardon thee," said Sir Patrick the younger, again shaking MacErchar heartily by the hand—"pardon thee, saidst thou? By St Bal-

drid, but I do like thee the better, friend Duncan, for the proper pride and feeling thou didst show. Thy pride is the pride of an honest heart, and had I, in good verity, been the very paltry and ungenerous knight that appearances did at first lead thee to imagine me to be, by the Rood, but I should have right well merited thy sovereign despisal."

"Oich-oich," said Duncan, his eyes running over with the stream of kindly affections that now burst from his heart, and quite confused by his powerful emotions, "she's over goods—she's over foolish—out fie, surely, surely, she's over goods. Gods bless her honour. But troth, she'll no be tarrying langer noo to disturb her honour's honour more at this times; and, ou ay, she'll come surely to good Squire Mortimer's at night, to see if her honour's leisure may serve for seeing her."

"Nay, nay," said Hepborne, after consulting the King's countenance by a glance, to gather his pleasure, "thou shalt not go now. We had nearly done with our parlance, and the renewal of it at this time mattereth not a jot, so sith that thou art here, my brave defender, perdie, thou shalt stay until I introduce thee to my father.—Father," continued he, turning to Sir Patrick the elder, "this is a brave soldier who

hath fought for his King in many a stark stoure with thee. I do beseech thee to permit him opportunity to speak to thee, and peraunter thou wilt all the more readily do so, when I tell thee that he did save my life from the murderous blows of an assassin, the which had well nigh amortised me, by dispatching the foul traitor with a single thrust of his spear."

"To hear that thou hast saved the life of my beloved son," replied Sir Patrick, advancing and taking MacErchar by the hand, "were in itself enow to coaret me to recognise thee as my benefactor, though I had never seen thee before. But well do I remember thy brave deeds, my worthy fellow-soldier."

"Oich-oich," cried Duncan, dropping on his knees, and embracing those of Sir Patrick, but altogether unable to express his feelings, "oich, oich—surely, surely—fat can she say? —foolish, foolish—hoot, toot—ower big rewards for her—ooch—ower good, surely—hoit-oit, Duncan will die hersell for the good Sir Patrick—ay, or for ony flesh o' hers—och-hone—uve, uve—she cannot speak."

"Yet did I never hear mortal tongue more eloquent," said Sir Patrick Hepborne the elder, "sith that its very want of utterance doth show forth the honest and kindly metal of the heart.

But, by St Andrew, I do know the heart to be bold as well as kind, seeing I forget not the actions of this heroic mountaineer in the field. Where all are brave, verily 'tis not an easy task to gain an overtopping height of glory; and yet less is it easy in the lower ranks of war, where the individuals stand thicker. Nathless, and maugre all these obstacles to fame, did this man's deeds in battle so tower above all others, that, humble as he was, I often noted them—yea, and he should have been rewarded too, had I not weened that he was killed in doing the very feat for the which I would have done him instant andsignal honour.—What came of thee," continued Sir Patrick, addressing MacErchar, who had by this time risen to his legs, "what came of thee, my valiant mountaineer, after thou didst so gallantly save those engineer-men and their engine, when basely abandoned by the French auxiliaries, at the siege of Roxburgh, whose retreat thou didst cover against a host of the enemy by thy single targe and sword, until others were shamed into their duty by thy glorious ensample?"

"Oich-oich—he, he, he!—a bonny tuilzie that," cried Duncan, laughing heartily, "a bonny tuilzie; troth, she was but roughly handled yon time. Of a truth, noble Sir Patrick,

she did get sike an ill-favoured clewer from a chield with a mokell mace, that she was laid sprawling on the plain; and syne, poo! out ower her body did the English loons come flying after our men, in sike wicked fashion, that the very breath was trampled out o' her bodys."

"But how didst thou 'scape with life after all?" demanded Sir Patrick the elder.

"Troth, after they had all trotted over her, the wind just came back again into her bodys," replied MacErchar; "and so she got up till her legs, and shook hersell, and scratched her lugs, that were singing as loud as twenty throstle-birds; when back came the villains, running like furies before our men, and whirled her away wi' them, or ever she kend, into the town. There she lay prisoners for mony a days, till she broke their jails, and made her way to the Highlands. But troth, she took her spulzie wi' her, for she had hidden that afore, and kend whare to find it again."

"Of a truth, the deed was one of the most desperate I did ever behold," said Sir Patrick the elder, recurring to MacErchar's action, to which he had alluded. "He planted himself against a host, and seemed doomed to certain destruction. 'Tis a marvel that he is alive."

Whilst Sir Patrick Hepborne and the Earl

of Moray, who also remembered him, were holding some farther conference with MacErchar, Sir Patrick the younger approached the King, and privately begged a boon of his Majesty, the particulars of which he specified to him.

"'Tis granted, Sir Patrick," whispered the King; "but let it be asked of us aloud, that such part of the populace who may have been listening to what hath passed may have their minds filled also with the wholesome ensample of their King rewarding virtue."

In obedience to Robert's command, Hepborne threw himself on one knee before him, and addressed him in a loud and distinct voice.

"My liege, I do humbly beg a boon at thy royal hands."

"Speak forth thy volunde, Sir Patrick Hepborne," replied the King; "there are few names in our kingdom the which may call for more ready attention from King Robert, than that the which hath ever been heard shouted in the front of his armies, and in the midst of the ranks of his discomfited enemies."

"The boon I do earnestly crave of your Majesty is, that you will be graciously pleased to bestow upon this gallant soldier, Duncan MacErchar, a commission in thy Royal Guard."

"He hath it," replied the King, "he hath

it cheerfully at thy request, Sir Patrick; and by the faith of a King, it doth right well pleasure us thus to exercise the happiest part of our royal power—I do mean that of rewarding loyal bravery such as this man hath so proved himself to possess; yea, and no time so fitting, methinks, for the exercise of this power; for when war is beginning, we should show our people that we do know to reward those who do well and truly serve us."

"Kneel down, kneel down, I say, before Robert King of Scotland," said the Earl of Moray, slapping the astonished MacErchar upon the back, as he stood bereft of all sensation on discovering in whose presence he had been standing and prating so much. He obeyed mechanically, whilst a shout arose from that part of the crowd who had heard all that passed, and was caught up gradually by those farther off, who cheered upon trust long ere the story could spread among them. The King moved away; but still Duncan remained petrified upon his knees, with his hands clasped, his eyes thrown up, and his mouth open, until Sir Patrick the younger showed himself his best friend, by awaking him from his trance and leading him away, amidst the ceaseless shouts of the mob.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DUNCAN MACERCHAR'S intellect was so much confused by the unexpected discovery that he had been standing and talking before his King, a being whom he had always conceived to be something more than man, and whose image had floated like a spirit before his misty eyes, that it was some time ere Sir Patrick Hepborne could make him comprehend the good fortune that had befallen him. He then inquired eagerly into the nature and advantages of the situation which had been so graciously bestowed upon him by his Majesty; and finding that he was to be an officer in that corps of stipendiaries who were always on royal duty, with the best possible pay and perquisites, and superb clothing, he asked Hepborne, with some degree of earnestness, what became of the corps during the time of war.

"They never go to war, unless when the King appears in the field in person," replied

Sir Patrick; "and of that I well wot there is but little chance during this reign."

"Uve, uve," cried MacErchar, with a look that showed he was but half satisfied; "and is she never to see the English loons again? Sure, sure, of what use will be the pay and the harness, an she must liggan at home while tothers folks be at the wars? And is she never to have the good luck to fight at the back of the good Sir Patrick again? Oich-oich, she would like full weel to see her down, and ane Englishman cleavin her skull, and her nanesell wi' a pike in the body o' the chield—oich-hoich! it would be braw sport. Sure, she would rather fight for Sir Patrick, yea, and albeit she got nothing but cuffs and scarts for her pains, than sit wi' her thumbs across serving a king himsell, though she got goupins of gold for her idleness. Troth, she would die for Sir Patrick."

"And wouldst thou sacrifice the honour, yea, and the weighty emolument of a commission in the King's Guards, with all the fair promise of advancement the which it doth hold forth to thee, for the mere gratification of a chivalric self-devotion to my father?" demanded Hepborne, desirous to try him.

"Out ay—surely, surely, she would do that;

and little wonder o' her, too, she would think it," replied MacErchar.

"Wouldst thou, then, that I do resign thy commission to the King, and that I do obtain for thee a lance among my father's spears?" asked Hepborne.

"Oich-oich!" cried MacErchar, rubbing his hands, and with his eyes sparkling with delight; "surely her honour is ower good—ower good, surely. But if her honour will do that same, oich-oich! Duncan MacErchar will be happy—oop, oop, happy. Troth, she will dance itsell for joy. Oit, she may need look for no more till she dies, God be good unto her soul then! Oich, will her honour do this for her?" demanded Duncan eagerly of Hepborne, and in his more than usual keenness, taking the knight's hand, and squeezing it powerfully; "will her honour do but this for her?"

"Verily, I shall at least do for thee what I can," replied Hepborne, heartily shaking his hand; "albeit so honourable a gift from thy King may not be lightly rejected. Yet will I do what I may for thee. Let me find thee with mine esquire to-morrow morning; thou shalt then hear the result of mine application to the King."

Hepborne was as good as his word. He

craved an audience of the King, and, being admitted to his couchee, the good Monarch was pleased with the singularly disinterested wish of the Highlander, and immediately signified his gracious pleasure that MacErchar should retain the commission in his Guards, whilst he should be permitted to follow the banner of Sir Patrick Hepborne to the wars. The old knight, who happened to be present, was much touched by Duncan's devotion to him, and very gladly admitted him among his followers, so that every wish of MacErchar's heart was more than gratified.

As Sir Patrick Hepborne was quitting the royal apartments, and as he was passing through a small vestibule feebly illumined by a single lamp, he was almost jostled by a tall figure, who, enveloped in an ample mantle, was striding hastily forward towards the door of the room whence he had issued, the metal of his harness clanging as he moved.

"Ha! Sir Patrick Hepborne," cried the Wolfe of Badenoch, for it was he—"by the blessed bones of my grandfather, but thou art right far ben already in the old man's favour, that I do thus meet thee ishing forth from his chamber at an hour like this; but thou art more

welcome, peraunter, than his son the Earl of Buchan.—Is the King alone?"

"By this time I do ween that he is, my lord; for, as I left him, the Earl of Fife, the Earl of Moray, and my father, who had been in conference with him, were preparing to take their leave by another door, and the King was about to retire into his bed-chamber, with the gentlemen in waiting on his person."

"Ha!" said the Wolfe—"John Dunbar, Earl of Moray, said'st thou?—By my word, but he seemeth to be eternally buzzing about the King, ay, and he doth buzz in his ear too, I warrant me. Hast thou seen or heard aught of the Bishop of Moray being here?"

"The Bishop of Moray had an audience of his Majesty this very day, on his arrival," replied Hepborne; "and if I mistake not, he did take his leave, and hath already departed on his homeward journey."

"Ha! 'tis well," replied the Wolfe, hoarsely, and gnashing his teeth as he said so. "Good night, Sir Patrick. I may, or I may not, see thee in Aberdeen at this time, for I know not whether I may, or may not, ride hence again anon." So saying, he passed hastily towards the door leading to the King's private chamber, to reach which he had several apartments to pass through.

The aged Robert, tired by the unusual fatigue he had that day undergone, was alike glad to get rid of business and of his privy councillors. Retiring into his bedchamber, and laying aside the dignity of his high estate, his two attendants assisted him to put on his robe-de-chambre, and he immediately descended to the more humble level of a mere man, to which even the greatest and most heroic potentate is reduced by the operations of his valet. His legs had been already relieved from those rolls of woollen which had been employed to cherish and to support them during the day; and being seated in an easy-chair of large dimensions, among ample crimson cushions, his pale countenance showed yet more wan and withered under the dark purple velvet cap he wore, from beneath which his white hair curled over his shoulders. Though his eyes were weak and bleared, their full and undimmed pupils beamed mildly, like the stars of a summer twilight. He had just inserted his limbs knee-deep into a warm foot-bath, which one of his people had placed before his chair, when a loud tap was heard at the door.

"Ha!" said the King, starting, "get thee to the door, Vallance, and see who may knock so

late. By the sound, we should opine that either rudeness or haste were there."

Vallance did as he was ordered, and, on opening the door, the Wolfe of Badenoch stepped into the apartment, and made a hasty and careless obeisance before his father. The old King's feeble frame shook from head to foot with nervous agitation when he beheld him.

"Son Alexander, is it thou?" demanded Robert, with astonishment. "We looked not to have our sacred privacy disturbed at so unseemly an hour, yea, and still less by thee, whose head, we did ween, was shrouded by shame in the darkness of thine own disgrace, or rather buried, as we had vainly hoped, amid the dust and ashes of ane humble repentance. What bringeth thee hither?—what hath"——He stopped, for he remembered that they were not alone. "Vallance, and you, Seyton, retire. Wait without in the vestibule;—we would be private. What hath brought thee hither, son Alexander?" repeated he, after the door was shut upon them. "I wot thou art but a rare guest at our court, and methinks that, infected as thou art at this present time, thou art but little fitted for its air."

Naturally violent and ferocious as was the Wolfe of Badenoch, he now stood before his

father and his king, a presence in which he never found himself without being in a certain degree subdued by the combination of awe, early inspired into his mind by this twofold claim on his respect, and to which he had been too long accustomed, to find it easy to rid himself of it. The grim Earl moved forward some steps towards the chair where his Majesty was seated, and again louting him low, he repeated the obeisance which the venerable form of his parent and sovereign commanded.

"My liege father," said he at length, "I do come to pay mine humble duty to your grace, and——"

"Nay, methinks thou shouldst have bethought thee of humbling thy fierce pride before another throne than ours, ere thou didst adventure to wend thee hither," interrupted the King, with indignation. "It would have well become thee to have bowed in humble contrition before the episcopal chair of our Right Reverend Bishop of Moray, yea, to have licked the very dust before his feet. Then, with his absolution on thy sinful head, mightest thou have approached the holy altar of God, and the shrine of the Virgin, in penitence and prayer; and after these, and all other purifications, we mought have been

again well pleased to have seen our reclaimed son mingling with the nobles of our court."

"I do see that the Bishop of Moray hath outrode me," said the Wolfe of Badenoch, his eye kindling, and his cheek darkly reddening, the flame of his internal ire being rendered more furious by the very exertions he was making to keep down all external symptoms of it. "The Bishop hath already effunded his tale in the royal ear; but yet do I hope that thou wilt hesitate to condemn me, yea, even on the Bishop's saying, without hearing what I may have to declare in mine own defence."

"Son Alexander," said the old King, mildly, and at the same time slowly shaking his head as he spoke, "we do fear much that thou canst have but little to tell that may undermine what the soothfast Bishop, Alexander Barr, hath possessed us of."

"He hath been with thee, then, my liege father?" said the Wolfe, in a voice of eager inquiry, and at the same time biting his nether lip.

"Yea, the godly Bishop of Moray hath been with us this very day," replied the King. "He hath harrowed up our soul with the doleful tale of the brenning of our good burgh of Forres—of the great devastation of men's dwellings,

goods, and mœubles, the which thy fury hath created—the sacrilege of the which thou hast been guilty in reducing God's house and altar to ashes, as also the house of his minister—the wicked and as yet unestimated sacrifice of the lives of our loving subjects, the which thou hast occasioned."

"As God is my judge, my liege," replied the Earl, impatiently, "as God is my judge, there was not a life lost—credit me, not one life. The hour of the night was early when the deed was done; yea, and it was done openly enough, so that there was little chance of mortal tarrying to be food for the devouring flames. Trust me, my liege father, I did secretly send to certify myself, as I can now truly do thee, on the honour of a knight, that not a life was lost."

"Nay, in truth, it must be confessed that the Bishop spake only from hearsay as to this head of charge against thee," replied the King, "and, of a truth, thou hast lightened our mind of a right grievous part of its burden by thy so solemn denial of this cruel part of the accusation against thee. Verily, it was to my soul like the hair-shirt to the back that hath been seamed by the lash of penance, to think that flesh of ours could have done such wanton murder on innocent and inoffensive burghers. But yet, what

shall we say to thy brenning of God's holy house—of the gratification of thy blind and brutal thirst of vengeance even by the destruction of his altars, and of the images of his saints?"

"Nay, mine intent was not against the church," replied the Wolfe, "but rage 'reft me of reason, and I deny not that it was with mine own hand that I did fire it; yet was it soon extinguished, and the choir only hath suffered. But," continued he, as he turned the subject with increasing irritation, "but had not an excommunication gone forth so rashly against me, yea, and poured out alswa by him who hath ever been mine enemy, the flood of my vengeance had not flowed; and if it hath swept all before it, by the Rood, but Bishop Barr himself must bear the coulpe of what evil it may have wrought."

"Speak not so horribly, son Alexander," said the King, with emotion. "Thine impious words do shock mine ear. Lay not blame to Bishop Barr, for at last hurling upon thee the tardy vengeance of the Episcopal chair, which thine accumulated insults did loudly call for, long ere his long-suffering temper did permit him to employ them. Didst thou not outrageously and sacrilegiously ravage and usurp the lands of the church in Badenoch? and didst thou

not refuse to restore them to the righteous possession of our holy Mother, when called on so to do?"

"Yea," replied the Wolfe of Badenoch, waxing more angry, and less scrupulous in his manner of speaking, as well as in his choice of terms, as his father thus began to approach nearer to the source of all his heart-burnings with the Bishop—"yea, I did indeed seize these lands; but, by the mass, it was not against the church that I did war in so doing, but against mine insidious enemy, Alexander Barr, who did feed himself fat upon their revenues. And well I wot hath he worked for my vengeance.—Hath he not poisoned thine ear against me?—hath he not been ever my torment?—hath he not been eternally meddling with my domestic, with my most private affairs?—hath he not sported with my most tender feelings?—hath he not done all that in him lay to rend the ties of my dearest affections?"

"Ah, there—there again hast thou touched a chord, the which doth ever vibrate to our shame," replied the King, deeply distressed by the remembrance of the subject which the Wolfe had awakened. "That disgraceful connexion with thy leman Mariota Athyn—'tis that which hath poisoned the source of all thine actings,

and that hath thereby transmewed the sweet waters of our life into bitterness and gall. Did we not write to thee with our own hand, urging thee to repentance, and beseeching thee to dismiss thy sinful and impure mate, and cleave to thy lawful wife, Euphame Countess of Ross, and——"

"Nay, my liege father, I wot this is too old a wound to be ripped up now," interrupted the Wolfe of Badenoch, beginning to wax more and more ireful: "ha! by the Rood, but 'tis sore to bear—cruelly sore. I did come hither to complain of the evil usage—of the disgrace—of the insults which this upstart priest hath thrown on me, hoping for a father's lenient interpretation of mine actings; yea, and that some salve might have been put to the rankling sores this carrion hath wrought on me; but the croaking raven hath been here before me—he hath already sung his hoarse and evil-omened song in thine ear, and all that I may now say cannot purge it of the poison with which it hath been filled. By my trusty burlybrand, but thou hast forgotten the mettle of thy son Alexander."

"Oh dole, dole, dole!" cried the old King, clasping his hands in bitter affliction at the obstinacy shown by his son; "what can be done with a heart which beareth itself so proudly,

which refuseth to listen to the voice of reason, which despiseth a father's counsels, and which resolveth to abide in its wickedness!"

"Wickedness!" replied the Wolfe fiercely, and enchafing more and more as he went on; "by the holy Rood, but I do think that the word is ill applied. Meseems that to throw her off who hath borne me five lusty chields, and who hath stuck to me through sun and wete, would savour more of wickedness than to continue her under the shadow of my protection.—Ha! by my beard, but the voice of reason—ha, ha, ha!—is like to be as much with me, in this case, as against me. Thank God, I have reason—yea, and excellent reason too—full, vigorous, and perfect reason—whilst thou hast thine, old man, far upon the wane. Whatsoever mountaunce of reason thou mayest have once had, by Heaven, thou dost now begin to dote. Yet what was thy reason, in like matters, when it was at the best? Didst thou not thyself live a like light life in thy youthhood, and dost thou school me for having followed thine ensample?"

"Oh, dole, dole!—oh, woe for my sins!" cried the old man, agonized by his son's intemperate accusation of him; "'tis bitter, I wot, to bear the reproach of a wicked and undutiful son.—O, alas for my sins!—yet sure, if I have

had any, as the blessed Virgin knoweth I do humbly confess them—and may her holy influence cleanse me from them—if I have had sins, surely I have dreed a right sore penance for them in having thee as an everlasting scourge to my spirit. God, doubtless, gave thee to me for the gracious purpose that thou mightest be as bitter ligne-aloes, to purge away the disease of my soul, and may he sanctify the purpose of mine affliction.—But what art thou, sinful wretch that thou art, who wouldst thus cast blame on thy father, yea, and ignominy on thyself? If I sinned in that matter, did I not awaken from my sin and repent me? did I not do all that mortal could do to salve the misery I had begotten? did I not——But thou art a cruel and barbarous wretch, a disgrace and infamy to thy father—a diseased, polluted, and festering limb, the which should be cut off and buried out of sight."

"Old dotard," cried the Wolfe, his fury now getting completely the better of him, "talk not thus—I—I—I—ha!—provoke me not—thou hadst better——"

"Get thee to thy home," replied the King; "turn thy vile strumpet forth, and, above all, humble thyself in penitence before the good Bishop Barr, who, godly man, hath been un-

wearied in his pious endeavours to reclaim thee from thy sinful and polluted life. Lick the dust from the very shoes of the saintly Bishop of Moray;—in his Christian mercy he may forgive thee, and thou mayest then hope for restoration to our royal favour; but if thou dost not this, by the word of a King, I will have thee thrown into prison, and there thou shalt liggen until thou shalt have made reparation to God and man for all thine impurities, and all thine outrages and sacrileges."

"Ha!" cried the enraged Earl of Buchan, half drawing his dagger, and then returning it violently into its sheath, and pressing it hard down, as if to make it immovable there were the only security against his using it; whilst, at the same time, he began to pace the apartment in a furious manner;—"ha! what!—confine the eagle of the mountain to a sparrow's cage? chain down the Wolfe of Badenoch to some walthsome den? threaten thy son so, and all for an accursed, prating, papelarde priest?—Old man," said he, suddenly halting opposite to his father, and putting a daring hand rudely on each shoulder of his Majesty, whilst his eyes glared on him as if passion had altogether mastered his reason—"old dotard carl that thou art, art thou not now within my grasp? are not thine attendants be-

yond call? is not the puny spark of life that feebly brens in that wintry frame now within the will of these hands? What doth hinder that I should put thee beyond the power of executing thy weak threats?—what doth hinder me to——"

He stopped ere he had uttered this impious parricidal thought more plainly. The old man blenched or quailed not; nay, even the agitation which he had before exhibited,—an agitation which had been the result of anger and vexation, but not of fear,—was calmed by the idea of approaching death; and, pitying his son more than himself, he sat immovable, like some waxen figure, his mild eyes calmly and steadily fixed upon the red and starting orbs of the Wolfe of Badenoch. The group might have been copied for the subject of the martyrdom of a saint.

"'Tis the hand of God that hindereth thee, son Alexander," said the aged monarch slowly and distinctly.

The ferocious Wolfe could not withstand the saint-like look of his venerable father. The devil, that had taken possession of Lord Badenoch's heart, was expelled by the beam of Heaven that shot from the eyes of the good King Robert. Those of his son fell abashed before

them, and the succeeding moment saw the hard, stern, and savage Earl on his bended knees, yea, and weeping before the parent, of whom his ungovernable rage might have made him the murderer. There was a silence of a minute.

"Forgive me, forgive me, father. I knew not what I did; I was reft of my reason," cried the Wolfe of Badenoch, groaning with deep agony and shame.

"Son Alexander," said the King firmly, yet as if struggling to keep down those emotions of tenderness for his son which his sudden and unexpected contrition had excited; "Son Alexander, albeit the consideration, that the outrage was done by the hand of a son against a father, doth rather aggravate the coulpe of the subject against the King, yet as it doth regard our own royal person alone, we may be permitted to allow the indulgent affection of the parent to assuage the otherwise rigorous justice of the monarch. So far as this may go, then, do we forgive thee."

The Wolfe remained on the ground, deeply affected, with his head buried within his mantle.

"But as for what the duty of a sovereign doth demand of us," continued Robert, "in punishing those malfaitours who do flagrantly

sin against the laws of our realm, and those, above all, who do sacrilegious outrage against our holy religion and church, be assured that our hand will be as strong and swift in its vengeance on thee as on any other; nor shall these thy tears make more impression on us, than thine ungovernable fury did but now appal us. Doubt not but thou shalt feel the full weight of our royal displeasure; yea, and thou shalt dree such punishment as befits the crimes thou hast committed against God and man, unless thou dost straightway seek the footstool of the injured Bishop of Moray. Nay, start not away, but hear us; for thou shalt suffer for thy crime, unless thou dost straightway seek the injured Bishop's footstool, and bowing thy head in the dust before it, submit thee to what penance he in his great mercy and wisdom may hold to be sufficient expiation for thy wickedness."

The Wolfe of Badenoch started up, and again began to pace the room in a frenzy; and as Robert went on, he became more and more agitated by passion, gnashing his teeth from time to time, and setting them against each other, as if afraid to permit himself the use of speech, and with his arms rolled up tight into his mantle, as if he dreaded to trust them at liberty.

"Nay, never frown and fret, son Alexan

der," continued the King. "By Saint Andrew, 'tis well for thee that thou didst come to us thus in secret, for hadst thou but had the daring to appear before us when surrounded by the Lords of our court, verily our respect for justice must of needscost have coarcted us to order thee to be forthwith seized and subjected to strict durance. As it is, thou mayest yede thee hence for this time, that thou mayest yet have some space left thee to make thy peace with the holy Bishop Barr; for without his pardon, trust me, thou canst never have ours. And we do earnestly counsel thee to hasten to avail thyself of this merciful delay of our sovereign vengeance, for an thou dost not speedily receive full absolution from the godly prelate whom thou hast so grievously offended, by the word of a King I swear, that thou shalt liggen thee in prison till thou diest."

The Wolfe of Badenoch heard no more. He relieved his hands in a hurried manner from the thraldom in which he had imprisoned them—halted in his walk, and glared fiercely at the King—groped again at the handle of his dagger—threw up his arms in the air with frenzied action—dashed his clenched fists against his head—and then rushed from the royal presence with a fury which was rendered suffi-

ciently evident by the clanging of the various doors through which he retreated.

The King folded his hands—groaned with deep agony—looked up to Heaven—uttered a short petition to the Virgin, to have mercy on the disordered and polluted soul of his unhappy son, and to beseech her to shed a holy and healing influence over it, that might beget a sincere repentance; and then giving way to all the feelings of a father, he burst into tears, which he in vain attempted to hide from the attendants, who soon afterwards appeared.

CHAPTER XXV.

It was more than a week after the departure of the Earl of Moray and his friends from Tarnawa, that Rory Spears was ordered to attend the Countess of Moray, to receive her instructions for the duty his master had left him at home to fulfil. He was called into the room, where the lady, in whose service he was to be employed, was sitting veiled; but the Countess had not more than time to open the matter to him, when she was interrupted by a message from her nephew, Sir Andrew Stewart, who, with very opposite feelings to those of Rory, had found some plausible excuse for not going with the Knights to Aberdeen, and now craved a short audience of the Countess. The English lady arose, and retired into the recess of a window, where Katherine Spears was plying her needle, and Sir Andrew was admitted.

"My gracious aunt," said he, "I crave thy pardon for pressing my unbidden services; but,

I beseech thee, let me not be deprived of the highest privilege that belongs to knighthood; I mean that of being the prop and stay of beauty in distress. Thou knowest that I have some half dozen spears here. Be it my pleasing task, I entreat thee, to protect the lady through those difficulties and dangers that may beset her path. Trust me, she shall pass unscathed while I am with her."

"I am utterly astonished, nevoy," replied the Countess; "how, I pray thee, art thou possessed of the secret that any such emprise may be in hand?"

"Nay, it mattereth but little, I trow, how I know that, my noble aunt," replied Sir Andrew Stewart with a careless smile; "but, what may be to thee some deal more strange, peraunter, I do know the lady too.—Madam," said he, gliding gently past his aunt, and going up to the window, "I have only to tell thee that we have met at Lochyndorbe, to convince thee that I do not err; yet be not alarmed at what I have said; trust me, thou shalt find that I have over much delicacy and knightly courtesy about me, rudely to withdraw the veil in which thou hast been pleased to shroud thyself. I come but to offer thee mine escort, and I do fondly hope thou wilt not refuse me the gratification of

shielding and defending thee with this arm, amid the many perils that may environ thee in thy travel between Tarnawa and Norham."

"'Tis gallantly spoken of thee, nevoy," replied the Countess; "and albeit I do hope that danger there may be none in this our own country of Scotland, seeing, I have reason to believe, that the tide of war hath already been turned from us; yet will it give me joy to be certiorated of the safety of this sweet lady, who will, doubtless, most cheerfully accept thy proffered courtesy."

The lady readily made her acknowledgments to Sir Andrew, and gladly availed herself of his protection. Katherine Spears, who was to accompany her as a female companion on the journey, was rejoiced, like all young persons, at the prospect of so speedily seeing a little of the world, especially as her father was to be with her, and she was going in the service of a lady to whom she was already so much attached. But old Rory, who had been standing aloof during the conversation, showed by his countenance that he was ill satisfied with the arrangement which had been made, as well as with every one about him. He turned on his heel to leave the place, brandishing his gaudelip, and followed by a brace of large wolf-dogs in couples,

and began slowly descending the stairs, letting down first one-half of his ponderous person, and then the other, in succession, each step he took bringing out a *humph*, as a break to the continuity of his audible grumble.

"Ay, by St Lowry, wha wad ha' thought it, humph,—wha wad ha' thought that Rory Spears, humph, the Yearl's henchman, as a body mought say, umph,—that Rory Spears, that mought be caa'd as necessar till his back as the hound to his heel, or the falcon to his wrist, humph,—that Rory Spears, I say, suld ha' been left behind at sike a time as this, umph, like a crazy old destrier, or ane crackit targe, hump, and to be turned ower to be the plaything to a silly bit lassie, umph, and an Englisher quean, too, mairs the wonder, hugh! Ay, and to make matters better, she hirsells me off, too, like an auld pair o' boots, to put faith in that kestrel, Sir Andrew Stewart, humph, a kite frae an ill nest, umph, ay, and ane that she'll ablins find is no that ower mukell to trust till, maugre a' his havers, umph! Weel, I maun e'en do the Yearl's wull, and his ladie's wull; but, troth, I sall gie mysell no unnecessar trouble wi' the lass, umph, aboon a', sith she hath chosen her ain champion, hugh! And that foolish glaikit thing Kate too, umph, she's smiling

and smirking, whan it wad better set her to be greetin, hugh! Och, sirs, sirs, it's a queer warld this. Whiew, whiew, Brand—whiew, whiew, Oscar," cried he, whistling to his hounds as he gained the area of the castle-yard; "come awa, my bairns, ye hae mair sense than half o' human fouk."

Next morning the beautiful milk-white palfrey, that had been the gift of Sir Patrick Hepborne to his page Maurice de Grey, stood ready caparisoned in the court-yard, along with those of the party who were to form the escort. The lady recognised him as she descended from the terrace, leaning on the arm of Sir Andrew Stewart, and her eyes ran over at sight of the noble animal. She stopped to caress him silently ere she mounted him, her heart being too full to permit her to trust her voice in speaking to him. As Sir Andrew Stewart aided her to rise into her saddle, the generous steed neighed a joyous acknowledgment of the precious burden he was intrusted with. The lady waved her hand to the Countess, who streamed her scarf from a window, in visible token of the prayers she was putting up for her safety; and the cavalcade rode slowly forth, the beauteous eyes of the Englishwoman so dimmed with tears, that she saw not aught that was around

her. She felt as if, in leaving Tarnawa, the last tie that had bound her heart to the object of its tenderest affections were dissolved, and it seemed to wither within her. She drew her mantle over her head, and gave way to her feelings, so that even Sir Andrew Stewart saw that, to break in upon her by conversation, would have been an intrusion too displeasing to be risked by him. He, therefore, continued to ride by her side in silence; and the example of the knight and lady spreading its influence over the party, not a word was heard among the riders.

The lady at last felt, that common courtesy required her to exert herself to control her feelings, and with some difficulty she began to enter into conversation with Sir Andrew Stewart, who rode at her side. She was now able to reconnoitre her attendants, which she had not had strength or spirits to do before. Before her rode the minstrel, Adam of Gordon, who no sooner saw that the lady had given his tongue license by breaking the silence she had maintained, than he began to employ the innocent artillery of an old man's gallantry on the dimpling charms of the lovely Katherine Spears, who, by her merry replies, and her peals of laughter, showed that she enjoyed the well-

turned compliments and high-flown speeches of the courteous and fair-spoken bard. Next came the spearmen, and a couple of lacqueys, and one or two other attendants; and last of all, wrapped up in a new fishing-garb of more than ordinarily capacious dimensions, with an otter-skin cap on his head, and his gaudclip in his hand, rode Rory Spears, sulky and silent, on a strong, active, little horse, whose ragged coat, here hanging down in shreds, and there pulled off bare to the skin, showed that he had been just rescued from the briars, brambles, and black thorns of the forest, which had been waging war against his sides for many a day. Rory was followed by a single wolf-hound, and his whole accoutrements were so far from being fitted for the important duty of convoy, to which he had been appointed, that it almost seemed as if he had purposely resolved it should be so from pure spite against his employment.

"Be'st thou for the hunts, Master Spears?" cried the wife of a publican, one of the Earl's dependants, whom curiosity hurried to her door to gaze at the travellers as they passed.

"Na, na, Meggy Muirhead," cried Rory, checking his horse for an instant. "The hunts, quotha! pretty hunts, truly. But hast thou e'er a stoup of yill at hand? for thou must know

I am bent on a lang and tedisome journey—yea, and I do jalouse a right thirsty and throat-guisening travel, gif I may guess from the dry husk that my craig hath already been afflicted withal."

"Thou shanna want a drap o' yill, Master Spears," cried Meggy Muirhead, who ran in and brought out a large wooden stoup, that, as she swung it on her head, foamed over the brim with generous nut-brown, by which she hoped to extract some information from Rory; "and where mayest thou be ganging, I pray thee? to join the Yearl maybe at the wars, Ise warrant?"

"Wars," cried Rory, "wars! Gie me the stoup, woman." And dropping his reins, and sticking the shaft of his gaudclip into his enormous boot, he stretched out both hands towards the double-handled stoup, and relieving mine hostess's head of the weight, he applied its laughing brim to his lips, and slowly drained it so effectually, that she had no occasion to replace it there. "Haugh! wars, said'st thou, Mistress Muirhead?" cried Rory again, as he held out the empty vessel, one handle of which the hostess now easily received upon a couple of her fingers, and kept swinging about as he was speaking—"wars! Look at me, am I girded for

the wars, thinkest thou? Na, I've e'en ta'en on to be tirewoman to yon black-e'ed Englisher leddy, and I'm to get a kirtle, and a coif, and a trotcosy, ere long. What thinkest thou of that, Mistress Muirhead?"

"Preserve me, the Virgin have a care o' us a'!" cried Mistress Muirhead in wonder, as Rory rode away; "wha ever heard tell o' sike a thing? The man's gane clean wud, I rauken."

Sir Andrew Stewart was unremitting in his attention to the lady, and all his speeches and actions were so cunningly tempered with delicacy, that she neither had the power nor the will to conceal her satisfaction at his treatment of her. He inwardly congratulated himself on the advance he supposed he was making in her good opinion, and with consummate art began to pave the way for a declaration of the violent passion he had secretly cherished for her, and gradually drawing nearer and nearer to her bridle rein as they rode, whispered the warm language of love in her ear in sentences that grew more and more tender at every step they advanced. Being occupied with her own thoughts, she had the appearance without the reality of listening to all he said, and the enamoured knight interpreting her silence into a

tacit approval, seized the first favourable opportunity of addressing her in plainer language.

"Most angelic lady," said he to her, as he sat beside her alone under an oak, where they had halted for rest and refreshment, "why shouldst thou undertake this tedious journey? Why shouldst thou leave Scotland, where thou mightest be made happy? To permit beauty so divine, and excellence so rare, to quit the Caledonian soil, would be a foul disgrace to the gallantry of its chivalry. Deign, I beseech thee, to listen to my ardent vows; let me be thy faithful knight. The love thou hast kindled in this bosom is unquenchable. Oh let me—"

"Talk not thus besottedly, Sir Knight," replied the lady, interrupting him hastily and rather sternly; "I may not honestly listen to any such. Gallantry may peraunter come with good grace enow from thy lips, but permit not thyself license with me, whose heart doth already belong to another, and who can allow these words of thine no harbour. I shall ever be grateful for this thy courteous convoy, but I can never return thy love. Stir not then the idle theme again."

"Nay, loveliest of thy sex," said the silky Sir Andrew Stewart with strange ardour, "to keep thy heart for one who hath so vilely

entreated thee, and that after thou didst sacrifice all to yield thee to his service, were neither just to thyself nor to me. Let me occupy that place in thy heart, so unworthily filled by one whose very bearing towards thee, (rather that of a master than of a lover,) did sufficiently betray how much those matchless charms had ceased to please his palled appetite. Let me then——"

"Sir Andrew Stewart," replied the lady with astonishment, mingled with a dignified expression of resentment, "I know not what falsehood may have conspired to conjure up so much unseemly boldness in thee, for I cannot believe that thou, a knight of good report, couldst thus have adventured to insult me unless on some false credence. What though my love hath been misplaced? My heart can never change. Urge not then again a theme that must ever rouse my indignation."

A cloud passed across the smooth brow of Sir Andrew Stewart as he received this resolute rejection of his passion, but it speedily disappeared.

"Forgive me, beauteous lady," said he after a pause, "mine unhappy passion hath indeed mastered my better reason. Kill me not with thy frowns, but lay my fault to the account of

these thy stirring charms. Sith that I dare not hope for more advancement, I shall still be the humblest of thy slaves, for to cease to love thee were impossible."

After this decided repulse, Sir Andrew Stewart confined his attentions to those of mere courtesy. Towards evening they began to descend into a narrow glen, watered by a clear river. The hills arose on both sides lumpish and vast, and the dense fir forest that covered them rendered the scene as gloomy as imagination could fancy. As they picked their way down the steep paths of the forest, they caught occasional glimpses of the lone tower of a little stronghold that stood on a small green mound, washed by the river on one side, and divided from the abrupt base of the mountain by a natural ravine that bore the appearance of having been rendered more defensible by art.

"Behold the termination of our journey of this day," said Sir Andrew Stewart to the lady. "Thine accommodation, beauteous damsel, will be but poor; yet even such as thou mayest find it, it may be welcome after the fatigue thou hast endured."

They reached the bottom, and crossing the ravine by a frail wooden bridge, climbed a short ascent that led them to the entrance of the little

fortalice, that wore the appearance of having been lately demolished in some feudal broil; for the massive iron gate of the court-yard lay upon its side half buried among the weeds, many of the outhouses too were roofless, and bore recent marks of having been partly consumed by fire.

"Alister MacCraw," said Sir Andrew Stewart to an old man, who came crawling forth from the low entrance of the tower at the sound of the bugle, "so thine old dwelling yet standeth safe, I see. I trust it may afford us some better harbour than those roofless barns and byres do show?"

"In troth not mockell better, Sir Andrew Stewart," replied the old man; "but stone vauts wunna brenn like thacken roof. Troth 'tis mockell wonders that the Yearl o' Buchan wouldna gar mend them up, and put some stout loons to guard them, sith he doth use to lodge here when he doth travel between Buchan and Badenoch; an yon bit gavels were mended, and yon bit breach in the wa' yonder, and——"

"Nay, Allister, spare thy counsel for my father's ear," replied Sir Andrew Stewart impatiently, "and forthwith proceed to house us as

best thou mayest. Let us see how this lady may be bestowed."

"Thou knowest there be no great choice of chambers," replied the old man, with a certain leering chuckle, which the lady could not understand.

MacCraw had reason for what he said, for the simple plan of the building was of three stories. That on the ground floor contained one large vaulted kitchen, occupied by the old man, with two small dark chambers. A stair, ascending from a central passage, running directly from the outer door, led to a room occupying the whole of the second floor of the building; from a farther angle of which, a small stair wound up within a hanging turret to a single apartment in the uppermost story.

The lady was ushered by Sir Andrew Stewart into the kitchen, where MacCraw busied himself in renovating the embers on the hearth, and soon afterwards in preparing some refreshment. The knight spoke little and abstractedly, and rising at last, he mumbled something about orders he had to give, and abruptly left the place.

"Erick MacCormick," said he to his esquire, "I would speak with thee apart."

The esquire followed his master without the

walls. "Erick," said Sir Andrew again, when he judged that they were beyond all risk of being overheard, "I did try to move the lady to give ear to my love, but she hath sternly rejected me, yea, and that with signs of no small displeasure. I burn with shame for the blindness with the which my passion did hoodwink mine eyes."

"Hath she indeed refused thee, Sir Knight?" demanded the esquire. "By the mass, but with such as she is I would use smaller ceremony as a preface to mine own gratification."

"Ay, if we could without detection, Erick," replied Sir Andrew.

"This is a fitting place, meseems," said the esquire.

"'Tis as thou sayst, a fitting place, good Erick," replied Sir Andrew; "but albeit I may put sicker trust in thee, yea, and peraunter in most of mine own men, yet were it vain to hope that I might effect my purpose without being detected by one of her followers."

"Fear not, Sir Knight," said the esquire; "I trow we are strong enow to eat them both up."

"Nay, nay—that is not what I mean," replied Sir Andrew; "but thou know'st, Erick, that I do put value on character and repu-

tation. I have hitherto passed as a miracle of virtue, as a rare exception in the lawless family to the which I do belong; nay, even in the ear of my grandfather the King, hath my praise been sounded, and my name standeth in goodly odour with the very Bishop of Moray himself. I must not sillily wreck the vessel of my fortunes, while 'tis blown on by gales so favouring."

"In sooth, it were vain to hope to have thine actions pass withouten the remark of her followers," replied the esquire.

"Her followers!" said Sir Andrew. "I would not adventure aught with her, unless I were secure that none but the most faithful of mine own instruments should have cause even to guess at my share in the matter. Were but that sly fox, Rory Spears, out of the way, methinks we might contrive to throw dust in the eyes of the maid and the minstrel."

"If Spears be all the hinderance thou seest," replied MacCormick, "I beseech thee, be not afraid of him. By St Antony, but he cares not the value of a cross-bow bolt for her of whom he hath charge. I have had much talk with him by the way, and I will pledge my life that thou shalt win him to thy purpose with as much

ease, as thou mayst lure thy best reclaimed falcon. The old allounde is sore offended at being left behind by his master the Earl, to attend upon a damsel; yea, and the damosel herself, too, seemeth to have done little to overcome the disgust he hath taken at his employment. Trust me, Sir Knight, never hungry trout was more ready to swallow baited hook, than old Rory Spears will be to pouch a good bribe, that may be the means of ridding him of so troublesome and vexatious a duty."

"Art thou sicker in thy man?" demanded Sir Andrew Stewart, stopping short, after taking a turn or two in silent thought, with his arms folded across his breast.

"Nay, he did so effunde his ill-humour to me by the way, that I will venture my life for him," replied the squire.

"Seek him out straightway, and bring him hither," said the knight.

CHAPTER XXV.

MacCormick proceeded in quest of Spears, and Sir Andrew Stewart continued to pace backwards and forwards upon the green-sward, outside the rampart-wall, pondering how he might best open the negotiation. It was already dark, and villain as he was he felt thankful that it was so, for he had been ever accustomed to set so much value on outward reputation, that he was ashamed to lift the veil, even to him whom he was about to make an accomplice in his crimes. Footsteps were at last heard approaching softly, and Rory and MacCormick saluted him.

"Master Spears," said Sir Andrew Stewart, "this is a troublesome task the Earl hath imposed on thee."

"Task!" replied Rory, in a gruff ill-humoured tone; "I carena muckle how dour his tasks be, so he be present himsell for to see me fulfil

them; but to cast his trusty servant frae his back, and to tak a parcel o' young loons to the wars wi' him, is enew to break ane auld crazy heart like mine."

"'Tis indeed a bitter reproach on thee, Rory," said Sir Andrew, "and but little amended by the service thou art put upon. But what doth hinder thee to return? Surely I may save thee all this long and painful journey. My protection, methinks, may suffice for the lady."

"Na, na," replied Rory impatiently, being secretly nettled at the cheap rate at which his services were apparently held by the man he despised; "na, na—thy protection, Sir Andrew Stewart, that is to say, the protection o' thy stout lances yonder, may be a' weel enew; but I maun not at no rate be kenn'd to slight the wull o' my lord the Yearl; and to leave the lass, and gang back afore the journey be weel begood—hoot, that wadna do at a'."

"Thou say'st true, Rory," replied Sir Andrew; "but thou know'st I have ever been a friend to thee, and I would fain do thee a good turn on this occasion. Methinks I have hit on a scheme for saving thee thy pains and travel, preserving thy good character for fidelity to the Earl, and, finally, putting a purse of gold into thy pouch."

"Ay!" replied Rory, in a tone of surprise. "By St Lowry, an thou canst make a' that good, thou wilt work marvels, Sir Andrew."

"Nay, 'twill need no conjuror," said Sir Andrew Stewart. "Keep thou but out of the way this night, and see that thou dost keep the old minstrel with thee. Thou canst not sleep in the lady's chamber, thou knowest; therefore it is but natural to leave the entire charge of her to me, who am to spend the night in MacCraw's kitchen. And then—d'ye mark me—if the lady should chance to disappear during the night, no one knowing how, the blame must of needscost fall on me alone. Thou mayst then yede thee back with thy daughter to the Countess to-morrow to tell the tale; nay, peraunter, I may go with thee to make all matters smooth, by the confession of my careless watch; and so thou shalt hie thee after the Earl, and may yet join his standard in the field. Dost thou comprehend me now, friend Rory?"

Rory stood silently pondering over the tempting proposal. Sir Andrew Stewart drew forth the purse of gold, and the broad pieces chinked against each other as he dangled it in his hand. Their music was most seducing.

"Give me the purse," said Rory at length.

"'Tis thine," cried the overjoyed Sir Andrew

Stewart; "I know thee to be faithful, and I fear me not but that thou wilt earn it."

"I will do my best to deserve it," replied Rory.

"Quick, then, to thy duty," said Sir Andrew Stewart. "Be it thine to see that no one may approach the tower, who might disturb our plans."

"The safety of my daughter Kate must be secured to me," said Rory.

"I am answerable for it," replied Sir Andrew Stewart. "If I can so arrange it, she shall be committed to thine own care; but if I should be defeated in this matter, she shall sleep in the highest chamber, where she may be out of the way. But happen what will, her safety shall be mine especial care."

The conference being thus ended, Sir Andrew Stewart returned to partake of the meal which MacCraw had by this time prepared. A manifest change had taken place in his manner. His conversation was gay and sprightly, and he was so entertaining that the lady sat listening to him for some time after supper. At length the fatigue she had undergone began to overcome her, and she signified her wish to retire to rest. Katherine Spears, who had been out and in more than once during the meal, now lifted a lamp

to light her mistress up stairs to the principal apartment of the tower, which was destined to receive her.

"Katherine," said Sir Andrew Stewart, carelessly, after having paid his parting evening compliments, "when thou hast done with thine attendance on thy lady, MacCraw will show thee the way to where thy father is lodged, where a bed hath been prepared for thee also."

"Nay, Sir Knight," replied Katherine, with uncommon energy, "I will at no rate quit the tower, though I should sit up all night by this fire."

"That as thou mayst list, my maiden," said Sir Andrew Stewart, with the same tone he had already spoken in; "I did but wish to give thee the best harbour the place might yield. But now, I think on't, the high chamber may do well enow for thee after all. Here—drink thy lady's health in the remnant of her wine-cup, ere thou goest."

Katherine did so, and then tripped up stairs before her mistress. She no sooner found herself fairly within the door of the lady's apartment, than she shut it behind her, and began to look eagerly for the bolt, and she exhibited no small dismay when she saw that it had been recently removed. Trembling with agitation,

she then conducted the lady with a hurried step towards a pallet-bed, which had been prepared for her in one corner of the place, and, seating her on the blankets,—

"Oh, my lady, my lady," whispered she, half breathless with alarm, "I fear that some foul treachery may be designed against thee. Whilst thou didst sit at thy meal, I did step me up hither to see thy couch prepared, and as I returned through the lower passage, I overheard certain voices in the little vault to the right,—'When is it to be done?' said one.—'It must not be until late in the night,' replied another, 'for we must be sure that she sleeps.'—'Ay, and her abigail alswa,' said the first man.—'Nay, I trust she will be without the tower, for she would spoil all,' said the other. Just then as I was listening, the outer door of the tower was slowly opened, and my father's head appeared. He drew back when he saw me. I ran out to him. Help, help, father, said I to him in a whisper, or the lady will surely be the victim of treachery."

"And thy father," said the lady, stretching eagerly towards her damsel,—"what did thy father say?"

"He laughed at me, lady," replied Katherine, hesitating—"he laughed at my fears."

"But what were his words?—give me his very words, I entreat thee," anxiously demanded the lady.

"His words, lady," replied Katherine—"his words were but those of a bold man, who scorneth the fears of a weak woman. Trust me, he must be faithful, lady."

"Ay, Katherine, but his words—what were his very words?" asked the lady, with the same eagerness of manner.

"Nay, indeed, they were naught, lady," replied Katherine, "but thou shalt have them as they did drop from his very mouth.—'Tush! foolish quean,' said he, in a tone of displeasure at what he did suppose to be my silly apprehension; 'where sould there be treachery, think'st thou? But an there sould, tell thy lady that Rory Spears is ane auld fusionless doited dolthead, as unfit for stoure and strife as for warstratagem. What did cause his being left behind his lord the Yearl, but superannuation? The silly coof, Sir Andrew Stewart, guse though he be, is mair to be lippened till than Rory Spears.—But get thee in, lass, and tend on thy mistress;' and so saying, he opened the door of the tower, and shuffled me by the shoulder into the kitchen, where thou didst sit at supper. In vain did I try to catch thine eye after I enter-

ed.—But oh, sweet lady, believe not that my father can be traitor to thee."

"His words have spoken him to be anything rather than my protector," replied the lady, pale with alarm at what her maid had told her. "But," added she, with a forced smile, "thou hast redeemed his sin, by nobly resolving to share my danger, when thou hadst the opportunity of escaping from it. As it is, I must prepare me for the worst. I have still a dagger, and weak as is mine arm, it shall do bloody work ere I do yield to such villainy; yet, after all, thou mayst have mistaken the words thou didst hear? Let us trust in God and the Holy Virgin, then, and, above all things, let us put up especial prayers for protection from Her, who is purity itself."

The lady and her maiden knelt down together, and joined in earnest devotion, that was only damped at times as fancy led them to imagine they heard a soft tread on the stair, or a suppressed breathing at the door of the chamber. When their orisons were ended, they sat silent for some time. All was already quiet below, and an unaccountable and perfectly uncontrollable sleep, that seemed to bid defiance even to their apprehensions, was stealing insidiously upon them. Just at this moment Ka-

therine Spears uttered a short and faint scream, and had nearly swooned away. The lady started up in a frenzy of alarm, and drew her dagger, when, much to her astonishment as well as to her relief, she perceived the large wolf-hound that had followed Rory Spears, which, having unceremoniously put his cold nose into Katherine's well-known hand, had produced the damsel's sudden panic. The lady and her attendant viewed the unexpected appearance of this mute defender as an especial interposition procured for them by their prayers. But the scream, though scarcely audible, might have been heard below, and they listened in quaking dread. All continued quiet underneath them. But as they still listened, they distinctly heard a heavy footstep cautiously planted, but, to their utter amazement, it came from above downwards. The lady grasped her dagger more firmly, and wound up her determination to use it, if need should demand it. The steps still came stealing down the turret-stair, that communicated with the uppermost apartment, and at last the bulky form of Rory Spears, gaudclip and all, appeared before them.

"Heaven be praised!" murmured Katherine, as she sprang to meet her father. "By what miracle of Heaven's mercy art thou here?"

The lady stood aloof with her dagger clenched, still doubtful of his errand.

"And what for needs ye ask?" said Rory to his daughter, with a certain archness of expression quite his own. "Hath not my lord the Yearl o' Moray made a tirewoman o' me? and was Rory Spears ever kenn'd to be backward at his lord's bidding? Verily, it behoveth me not to desert mine occupation. So I am here to do my new mistress's wark, I promise thee."

"May Heaven grant that thou mayest not have something more cruel to do to-night than attend on dames," said Katherine Spears; "yet verily thy coming is most providential, for assuredly we are sore beset with treachery."

"Ay, ay, I ken a' that," replied Rory; "and troth it was the very thoughts o' a bicker that pat the pet out o' me, and wiled me hither. But stap ye baith yere ways up the stair there, and liggen ye down quietly, and leave me here to deal with whomsoever may come."

"He is true to thee, after all, lady," said Katherine with exultation.

"I rejoice to see that he is faithful," replied the lady; "may St Andrew reward him! Already are my fears banished, but irresistible sleep oppresses me. I feel as if I had swal-

lowed some potent drug. I cannot keep my head up."

"Nay, Katherine nods too," said Rory; "by the mass, some sleepy potion must have been mingled with your wine. Let me help ye both up stairs; ay, there ye may rest in quiet," said he, as he set down the lamp and was preparing to leave them, "and I'se leave Oscar with ye as a guard, for the loon had nae business here, and wi' me he might spoil sport;" and saying so, he tied up the dog beside them, ere he had done which both were in a profound sleep.

Having returned to the apartment below, Rory threw himself down on the bed, and huddled himself up in the blankets, with his inseparable companion the gaudclip by his side, and there he lay patiently to watch the event, until, the fire falling low on the hearth, the darkness and his own drowsiness overcame his vigilance, and he fell into deep oblivion.

He had not lain long in this state, when the door was slowly opened, and the head of Sir Andrew Stewart appeared. Over it there was a lamp, which he held up in his hand, so as to throw a glimmer of light into the further corner of the place. He paused for a moment, and seeing the form of a figure within the blan-

kets, and observing that all was quiet, he withdrew the lamp.

"She sleeps," whispered he to his esquire and the two men who were with him; "the potion hath worked as it ought. Approach the bed, yet be cautious; rude carelessness might break her slumbers. Let her not be awakened while she is within earshot of those within the place; ye may be less scrupulous anon. Approach and lift her up in the blanket; her weight can be but as that of an infant in such hands."

"No sike infant, I wot," muttered one of the men to the other, as they strained to lift up the blanket, with the enormous carcase of Rory Spears in it.

"By the mass, but she is a load for a wain," said the other.

"Be silent, ye profane clowns," said Sir Andrew.

"St Roque, how she doth snore!" said the first, in a lower voice.

"Silence, I say, villains," said Sir Andrew, "silence, and bear her this way."

"Hold, hold, Murdoch; the blanket is slipping," said one; "keep up your end, or we are done with her."

"Hout, she's gone," cried Murdoch, as his

end of the blanket slipped altogether, and Rory was rolled on the floor.

Though Rory had slept, his mind had been so fully possessed with the action he had prepared himself to expect, that he had dreamt of nothing else. He was no sooner rudely awakened by the shock of his fall, than his mind became full of his duty.

"Ha, villains," cried he, starting to his legs in a moment, and roaring to the full extent of his rough voice, as he flourished his gaudclip around him in the dark like a flail; "ha, caitiffs, have I caught ye? What, would ye dare to lay impure hands on the tender form of a lady of sike high degree? By St Lowry, but I'll settle ye, knaves."

All was now confusion. The knight and his instruments sought for the door with a haste that almost defeated their object. Precedence was by no means attended to; and Sir Andrew Stewart, being jostled aside, received a chance blow from Rory's gaudclip, that prostrated him senseless on the floor. The squire and the two men rushed down stairs, with Rory hard at their heels, and were making towards the door of the tower, when it was suddenly opened, and a party of horsemen appeared without.

"Halt!" cried a voice like thunder, that in-

stantly arrested the flight of the fugitives, and sent them, crouching like chidden curs, into the kitchen. The light that was there showed the terror and dismay of their countenance, and it also soon explained the cause, for he who entered was the Wolfe of Badenoch.

"What rabble and uproar is this in the lone peel-tower of Duncriddel?" demanded he. "Ha, Alister MacCraw, what guests be these thou hast got? Hay, Erick MacCormick and my son Andrew's people. What a murrain hath brought thee here, Master Esquire? Ha—speak—where is the worthy knight thy master?"

"My lord—my master, Sir Andrew—my lord—" replied MacCormick, hesitating from very fear.

"Ha! and Rory Spears too," continued the Wolfe; "what dost thou make here, old ottercap? Speak, and expound the cause of this uproar, if thou canst."

"I will, my lord," said Rory, "and that in sike short speech as I weel ken thou lovest to have a tale dished up to thee. Sir Andrew Stewart, thy son, did covenant wi' my leddy the Countess o' Moray, thy sister, to convoy ane Englisher leddy safe frae Tarnawa to Norham, and sure enew he brought her here, being

sae mockell o' the gate; but having no fear o' God or the Saunts afore his eyne, he did basely try to betray her, just the noo, afore I cam doon the stairs there."

"Ha, hypocritical villain!" cried the Wolfe. "By St Barnabas, but I have long had a thought that his affected purity was but a cloak for his incontinence."

"'Tis all a fabrication," cried MacCormick, who had now recovered his presence of mind so far as to endeavour to defend his master, though at the expense of truth; "'tis fearful to hear sike wicked falsehoods against thy son Sir Andrew Stewart."

"My lord Yearl," cried Rory, taking Sir Andrew's purse of gold from his pouch, "an thou believest that I do lie, here is a soothfast witness to what I have uttered."

"Ha! my son Andrew's purse, with his cypher on it," cried the Wolfe, casting a hasty glance at it. "How camest thou by this, Master Spears?"

Rory quickly told the Wolfe of the attempt made by Sir Andrew Stewart to bribe him from his duty, and shortly explained how he had watched his opportunity to creep up stairs unobserved, and to secrete himself in his daughter's apartment, together with the result.

"Foul shame on the sleeky viper," cried the Wolfe indignantly, after he had listened to Rory's abridgment: "But where hath the reptile hid himself all this while? By my beard, but he shall be punished for this coulpe." And so saying he seized upon a lamp, and rushing up stairs in a fury, beheld his son stretched on the pavement senseless, with a stream of blood pouring from his temple and cheek, which bore the deep impression of the hooked head of Rory Spears's gaudclip.

"Hay, ha!" exclaimed the Wolfe, with a changed aspect, produced by the spectacle which his son presented; "by'r Lady, but Andrew hath got it. Fool that he was, he hath already been paid, I wot, for his wicked device. Ha! the saints grant that he may not be past all leechcraft. Would that thou hadst hit less hard, old man. Though he be but the craven cock-chick of my brood, yet would I not choose to have his green grave to walk over."

"So please thee, my lord, it was dark, and I had no choice where to strike," said Rory, with much simplicity of manner. "But fear not," added he, after carelessly stooping down to examine the wound, "trust me, 'tis no deadly blow; moreover, 'tis rare that ill weeds do perish by the gate-side. I'se warrant me, he'll

come to; his breath is going like a blacksmith's bellows. But is't not a marvel, after all, to behold how clean I did put my seal upon his chafts, and it sae dark at the time? I'se warrant, he'll bear the mark o't to his dying day. Here, MacCormy, help me down the stair wi' him. Thou and I will carry his worship's body wi' mair ease than thou and thy loons wad ha'e carried mine, I rauken. But hear ye, lad; give not the lie again to any true man like me, or that brain-pan of thine may lack clampering."

The Wolfe of Badenoch was relieved, by discovering, on examination, that there was good hope of his son's recovery; and he employed himself and his people in using every means to bring it about. The whole night was spent in this way, but it was only towards morning that Sir Andrew Stewart began to show less equivocal signs of returning life, and even then he still remained in a state of unconsciousness as to what was passing near him. The circumstance of the sleepy potion they had drank, accounted for the lady and her damsel having remained undisturbed amid all the confusion that had prevailed. But the Wolfe of Badenoch, having occupied the morning in superintending the preparation of a litter to transport his wounded son to his Castle in Badenoch, when all was ready,

became impatient to depart, and desirous to see the lady ere he did so. Rory Spears was accordingly despatched to awake her, and in a short time she and Katherine appeared, with eyes still loaded with the soporiferous drug they had swallowed.

"Ha, what!" cried the Wolfe with astonishment, the moment the lady appeared; "by the beard of my grandfather, but I am petrified. Who could have dreamt that it was thou, my beauteous damosel? By'r Lady, but it is strange, that whether thou dost appear in the hauqueton or in the kirtle, thou shouldst still be harassed by importunate love-suit. But," continued he, courteously taking her hand and kissing it, "it erketh me sore to think that wrong so foul should have been attempted against thee by a son of mine. Thou hadst a claim for something better at our hands, both for thine own sake and for that of Sir Patrick Hepborne, a knight of whom the remembrance shall ever be grateful to me. Trust me, it giveth me pleasure to behold lealty where tyrant church hath tied no bands. Thou hast been basely deceived by him who undertook for thine honourable escort to Norham, and albeit I have reasons to think that the proud Priest of Moray hath secretly obtained a power of royal troops to repos-

sess him in his Badenoch lands, yet shall not this knowledge hinder me from fulfilling for thee that service which my traitor son hath so shamefully abused. I shall be myself thy convoy. Let the croaking carrion-crow of Elgin come if he dares; I have hardy heads, I trow, to meet him, who will fight whether I am there or not. Ha! by my grandfather's beard, an he had not flown from Aberdeen with the wings of the raven, he mought have been e'en now past giving me trouble."

"My noble Earl of Buchan, I do give thee thanks for thy kind courtesy," replied the lady; "but I may in no wise suffer it to lead thee to make sacrifice so great. Trust me, I fear not for the journey whilst I have this good man Rory Spears as mine escort. Under the guardance of one so prudent, brave, and faithful as he hath proved himself to be, I should nothing dread to wander over the world."

"And I wad defend thee, my leddy, frae skaith, ware it but frae the tining o' a single hair o' thy bonny head, yea, to the last drop o' blood in my auld veins," cried Rory with great enthusiasm, being delighted to observe that his worth was at last fairly appreciated.

"Ha! by my troth, but 'tis bravely spoken in both," cried the Wolfe. "Depardieux, I shall

not venture to interfere where there is so great store of confidence on one side and fidelity on the other. But yet thou must take some pairs of my lances with thee, Rory, for thou art but slenderly backed, methinks."

Even this much both the lady and Master Spears were disposed to refuse; but on learning that the mountain range through which they must pass was at that time more than ordinarily infested with wolves, Rory changed his mind, and consented to take four able lances with him, to be returned when he should consider their services no longer necessary.

All being now arranged for the departure of the two parties, the Wolfe of Badenoch became impatient. He courteously assisted the lady to mount her palfrey, and kissing her hand, bid her a kind adieu. He was about to leap into his own saddle, when he was accosted by Rory Spears.

"My lord Yearl o' Buchan, seeing that thy son Sir Andrew, i' the litter yonder, hath not yet gathered his senses enew to tak the charge o' his ain cunzie, I here deliver up to thee, his father, this purse o' goud he did gi'e me, the which my conscience wull at no rate let me keep, seeing that it wad in nowise let me do

that the which was covenanted for the yearning o't."

"Nay, by St Barnabas, honest Rory, but thou shalt keep the purse and the coin," cried the Wolfe, delighted with Rory's honesty; "thou hast rightly earned it by thy good service to thy lady. I will be answerable to my son Andrew for this thy well-won guerdon, so make thyself easy on that score."

"Thanks, most noble Yearl," cried Rory as he pouched the purse, and mounted his ragged nag to ride after the lady, his countenance shining with glee. "By'r lackins, but this is as good as the plunder of a whole campaign against the Englishers."

CHAPTER XXVI.

The English damsel and her attendants travelled slowly by a different route through the wild forest scenery of those mountains, with which the reader is already sufficiently familiar. So much of the morning had been expended ere they set out, that the length of their day's journey was considerably curtailed, and the heaviness that still hung on the eyelids of the lady and Katherine, from the drugged draughts they had swallowed, so overcame them, that they were well contented to look for a place of rest at a much earlier hour in the evening than they would have otherwise done. The information that Rory Spears had gathered about the wolves, made him also very ready to halt betimes, that he might have sufficient leisure to fortify the party against any chance of nocturnal attack from these ravenous animals, in a re-

gion where no human dwelling was to be expected.

It still wanted nearly two hours of sunset, when the cavalcade was winding gently up the narrow bottom of a wild pass, that, like a vast rent or cut in the mountains, divided the chain from its very summit to its base. From the close defile below, the eye could hardly ascend the steep and even slope of the rocky precipices to half their height, so closely did they approach on either hand. The pine forest, though still continuous, began to grow thinner as they advanced, and Rory Spears, like an able leader, was carefully scanning every point where he might hope to discover a strong and convenient position for encampment. At length, one of the Earl of Buchan's troopers, well acquainted with these wilds, showed him the upright face of a tall projecting crag, at a great height above, where there was a small natural cavern, and, accordingly thither it was resolved that they should ascend.

The ascent was long and arduous, but when they did reach the spot, it was discovered to be admirably fitted for their purpose. The rock rose smooth and perpendicular as a wall, and in the centre of it was the mouth of the cavern,

opening from a little level spot of ground in front. Rory began to take immediate measures for their security. Broken wood was collected in abundance, and a semicircular chain of fires kindled, so as fully to embrace the level ground, and touch the rock on either side of the cavern. Heather beds were prepared for the lady and her damsel under the dry arch of the cliff; and their hasty meal being dispatched, they wrapped themselves up in their mantles, and prepared themselves with good-will to sleep off the stupifying effects of the narcotic. Rory meanwhile drew his cavalry within his defences, and having posted and arranged his watches so as to ensure the keeping up of his fires, he sat down with the rest to recreate himself with what store of provisions they had carried alongst with them.

The lady's sleep was so very sound for some hours, that it bid defiance to all the merriment, the talking, and the music, that successively prevailed without. But at last it yielded to the continued twanging of the minstrel's harp, and she awaked to hear him sing, with great enthusiasm, the concluding stanzas of some tale, which he had been rhyming to those around him.

If minstrel inspiration wells
From yonder star-bespangled sky,
To which my heart so strangely swells,
As if it fain would thither fly;

Then on those mountain tops that rise
Far, far above the fogs of earth,
Thicker and purer from the skies
Must fall that dew of heavenly birth.

What marvel, then, my native land,
That heaves its breast to kiss high Heaven,
Hath fill'd my heart and nerved my hand,
And fresher inspiration given?

Then if my heart a spell hath wove
More potent than of erst it threw,
And ye have wept its tale of love,
With rifer tears than once it drew,

Think not thou mayst the song reward
With thine accustom'd dearth of praise,
It comes from no weak mortal bard,—
'Tis Scotland's spirit claims the lays!

Perfectly refreshed by her slumber, and cheered by the harper's strains, the lady arose from her couch, and stepped forth from the cavern to join her applause to the rudely-expressed approbation of Rory and his comrades. The air was balmy and refreshing, and she staid to hold converse with the good old minstrel.

"'Tis a beautiful night, Adam," said she; "see how the moonbeam sleeps on the bosom of yonder little lake far up the pass. How dark do these masses of pine appear, when con-

trasted with the silver light that doth play beyond them on those opposite steeps; how deep and impenetrable is the shadow that hangeth over the bottom far below us, where all is silent, save the softened music of the stream murmuring among the rocks. But, hark, what yelling sounds are these that come borne on the breeze as it sigheth up the pass?"

"'Tis the distant howling of the wolves, lady," cried the harper; "methinks the rout cometh this way. An I mistake not, 'tis a ravenous pack of famished beasts, that do pursue a deer or some other helpless tenant of the woods. Hark, the sound doth now come full up the bottom of the pass. List, I pray thee, how it doth grow upon the ear."

"I do hear the galloping of a horse, methinks," cried Rory Spears, who stood by.

"Holy Virgin, what dreadful screams were these?" cried the lady, starting with affright.

"St Andrew defend us," said the minstrel, shrinking at the thought; "it may be some fiend o' the forest that doth urge his hellish midnight chase through these salvage wilds."

"Na, na, na," replied Rory Spears gravely; "troth, I hae mair fear that it may be some wildered wanderer hunted by a rout o' thae

gaunt and famished wolves. St Lowry be wi' us, is't not awful?"

"Holy St Cuthbert protect us," exclaimed the lady, after a pause, and shuddering as she spoke; "that cry, oh, that cry was dreadful; 'twas a shriek of terror unspeakable; fear of an instant, of a most cruel death, could have alone awakened it. Gracious Heaven, have mercy on the wretch who did give it utterance!"

"Hear, hear; holy St Giles, how he doth cry for help!" said Rory Spears. "Hear again; 'tis awsome. St Hubert be his aid, for weel I do trow nae mortal man can help him."

"Oh, say not so," cried the lady, with agonizing energy; "oh, fly, fly to his rescue; there may yet be time. Fly—save him—save him, and all the gold I possess shall be thine."

"Nay, lady," replied Rory, "albeit the very attempt wad be risk enew, yet wad I flee to obey thy wull, withouten the bribe o' thy gowd; and the mair, that it wad be a merciful, a Christian, and a right joyful wark to save a fellow-creatur frae sike ane awsome end. But man's help in this case is athegither vain. Dost thou no perceive that the clatter o' his horse's heels is no longer to be heard? nay, even his cries do

already return but faintly from far up the pass? And noo, listen—hush—hear hoo fast they do die awa; and hark, hark,—thou canst hear them nae mair."

"He hath indeed spurred on with the desperate speed of despair," said the lady; "but oh, surely thou mayest yet stop or turn his fell pursuers. Oh, fly to the attempt. Nay, I will myself go with thee. Hark, all the echoes of the glen around us are now awakened by their fearful howlings. Quick, quick; let us fly downwards—'tis but a mere step of way."

"Alas, lady," replied Rory, "to try to stop the accursed pack were now as hopeless as to think to gar the raging winds tarry on the mountain side. These hideous howls do indeed arise from the shades beneath us; but had we the legs and the feet o' the raebuck, the ravening rout wad be a mile ayont us ere we could reach the bottom. Hark, hoo they hae already swept on. Already the cruel din frae their salvage throats doth become weaker; and noo—hist, hist!—it is lost far up in the bosom of the mountains. May the Virgin and the good St Lawrence defend the puir sinner, for his speed maun be mair than mortal gif he scapeth frae the jaws o' thae grusome and true-nosed hounds. By my troth, an we hadna taken the due cau-

tion, we might hae been a supper till them oursells at this precious moment, the Virgin protect us!"

"Oh, 'tis most horrible," cried the lady, as she rushed into the cavern, her mind distracted, and her feelings harrowed up with the thoughts of the probable fate of the unhappy traveller. She sunk on her knees to implore mercy for him from Heaven, after which she threw herself on her couch: but her repose was unsettled; and when she did sleep, it was only to dream of the horrors her fancy had painted.

By the time the sun had begun to gild the tops of the mountains, Rory Spears was in action. The lady arose unrefreshed; and after she and her attendants had partaken of a slight repast, they were again in motion. Descending by a steep and difficult, though slanting path, they gradually regained the bottom of the pass, and proceeded to trace it upwards in a southern direction. As they obtained a higher elevation, the pine-trees became thinner, and at length they reached to a little mossy plain, where they almost entirely disappeared. In the middle of this was the small sheet of water, which had been rendered so resplendent in the eyes of the lady the night before by the moonbeams. It

was a deep inky-looking pool, surrounded by treacherous banks of black turf.

"Is this what distance and moonlight made so bewitchingly beautiful to our eyes?" said the lady to the minstrel.

"Thus it doth ever chance with all our worldly views, lady," replied the old man. "Hope doth gild that which is yet at distance, but all is dark and cheerless when the object is reached."

As they spoke, the approach of the party disturbed a flight of kites and ravens, which arose with hoarse screams and croakings from something that lay extended amid the long heath near the water's edge. It was the skeleton of a horse. The flesh had been so completely eaten from the bones by the wolves, that but little was left for the birds of prey. The furniture, half torn off, showed that the creature had had a rider. A few yards farther on, a single wolf started away from a broken part of the bog. Rory Spears's gaudclip was launched after him with powerful and unerring aim, and its iron head buried in the side of the animal, while at the same moment the quick-eyed Oscar seized the caitiff by the throat, and he was finally dispatched by several lances plunged into him at once. They sought the spot whence the gaunt

animal had been roused, and their blood was frozen by the horrid spectacle of the half-consumed carcase of a man.

It was of size gigantic; and although the limbs and body had been in a great measure devoured, yet enough of evidence still remained in the rent clothes, and in the lacerated features of the face, to establish beyond a doubt to the lady and the minstrel, who had known him, that he who had thus perished by so miserable a fate, was the wizard Ancient Haggerstone Fenwick.

A leathern purse, with a few gold coins in it, was found in his pouch; and, among other articles of no note, there was a small manuscript book of necromancy, full of cabalistical signs.

The spectacle was too horrible and revolting for the lady to bear. She therefore besought her attendants to cover the wretched remains, and with Katherine Spears retired to some distance until this duty was performed, and a huge monumental cairn of stones heaped over them, after which they again proceeded on their way.

The troopers belonging to the Wolfe of Badenoch were sent back as soon as Rory Spears judged that they might be spared with safety, and nothing occurred during the remainder of the journey to make him regret having so part-

ed with them. As the party travelled through the fertile Merse, they found that which should have been a smiling scene converted into a wilderness of desolation. The storm of England's wrath had swept over it, and the rifled and devastated fields, the blackened heaps of half-consumed houses and cottages, around which some few human beings were still seen creeping and shivering, like ghosts unwilling to leave the earthly tenements to which they had been linked in life, brought the horrors of war fresh before them. The aged man and the boy were the only male figures that were mingled with those groups of waiting-women that appeared. All who could draw a sword or a bow, or wield a lance, were already on their way to join the Scottish host, their bosoms burning with a thirst of vengeance.

As they were lamenting over the melancholy scene they were passing through,—for even the English damosel deplored the ravages committed by her countrymen,—their way was crossed by a troop of well-armed and bravely-appointed horsemen, which halted, as if to wait until their party should come up. Rory advanced to reconnoitre.

"Ha, Sir Squire Oliver," said he to the leader, whom he immediately recognised as be-

longing to the Lord of Dirleton, "can that in very deed be thee? Whither, I pray thee, art thou bound in array so gallant?"

"Master Rory Spears," replied the squire, with a look of surprise—"what, art thou too bound for the host?"

"Nay," replied Rory, mournfully, "I hae other emprise on hand just at this time. Goest thou thither?"

"Yea," replied the esquire, "I go with my lord's service of lances, to join the collected Scottish armies on their way to Jedworth. There will be rare work anon, I ween. Some English horses have been dancing over these fields, I see, but, by'r Lady, the riders shall pay for the sport they have had."

"Ha, their backs shall be well paid, I warrant me," cried Rory, flourishing his gaudclip around his head, while his eyes sparkled with enthusiasm.

"Nay, fear not," replied the esquire; "the rogues shall feel the rod, else I am no true man. But St Andrew be with thee, good Master Rory, I have no farther time to bestow." And as he said so, he gave the word to his men to move forward; the bugles sounded, their horses' heels spurned the ground, and their armour rang as they galloped briskly away, to make up for the time lost in the halt.

The lady and her attendants rode slowly on, but Rory lingered behind, to follow the rapid movement of the warlike files with an anxious eye; and when they wheeled from his view, he heaved a sigh so deep, that it was heard by the foremost of his own party.

"What aileth thee, Rory?" demanded Adam of Gordon.

"Heard ye not their bugles as they went?" replied Rory to him. "Was not the very routing o' them enew to rouse the spirit o' a dead destrier, and dost thou ask what aileth me? Is't not hard to be sae near the Yearl, and yet to see as little o' him or his men as gif they war in ane ither warld?—is't not cruel for a man like me to be keepit back frae the wark that best beseemeth him, whan his very heart is in't?"

"And why shouldst thou be kept back from it, Rory, now that thy duty to the lady is performed?" demanded the harper.

"Dost thou no see Kate yonder?" replied Rory, sullenly. "What is to be done with the wench, think ye? Sure I maun e'en yede me back again, to convoy the puir lassie safely to her mother."

"If the care of Katherine be all thy difficulty, Rory," said the lady eagerly, "thou

mayest easily provide for her safety by confiding her to me, on whom thy doing so will moreover be conferring an especial gratification. Let her, I pray thee, abide with me at Norham, whilst thou goest to the wars; and when peace, yea, or truce, doth happily come again, thou may'st forthwith reclaim her of me. Let me entreat thee, oppose not my wishes."

Rory's rough but warm heart had been long ere this entirely gained by the kindness, condescension, and beauty of the English damosel. He could not have refused her request, whatever difficulties it might have involved; but her present proposal was too congenial with his own wishes, and her offer altogether too tempting to be resisted.

"Troth, my leddy," replied he, with a tear glistening in his eye, "when we first forgathered at Tarnawa, and when the Yearl tell'd me that I was to be buckled till thy tail, I maun e'en confess I was in a sair cross tune at the news, for thou may'st see it's no i' my nature to be governed by woman-fouk, and gin the truth maun be tell'd, it was wi' sair ill wull I cam wi' thee. But noo, by St Lowry, I wad follow thee to the very warld's end; troth, thou may'st e'en whirl me round and round with thy

pirlywinky; and so, though I am no just confidently sicker that what I am doing is a'thegither that the which may be approven by my good dame at hame yonder, yet will I yield me to thy wishes and mine ain. Kate shall wi' thee to Norham, and I'll just tak a bit stride after the Yearl to see what he and the lave are a-doing."

"But thou shalt thyself with me to Norham first, that I may thank thee properly for the protection thou hast afforded me," said the lady.

"Nay, that may in no wise be, leddy," replied Rory; "I shall see thee safe to the northern bank of Tweed; but I wot nae Southron stronghold sall see me within its bounds, save as an enemy, to do it a' the skaith a foeman can, and that I would fain shun doing to ony place that mought have thy good wishes."

After some farther travel, the broad walls and massive towers of Norham Castle appeared before them, glowing with the slanting rays of the declining sun. A few steps more brought the Tweed in sight, and Rory Spears instantly halted.

"And noo I fear I maun leave thee, my leddy," said he, with an afflicted countenance, "for yonder's the Tweed."

The lady approached him, and, kindly taking his horny hand, gave utterance to the most gra-

tifying expression of her strong sense of the services he had rendered her, and at the same time attempted to force a purse upon him.

"Na, na, my leddy, I'se hae nae gowd frae thee," said he; "besides, I hae naething ado wi' gowd whare I'm gaun; I'se get meat, drink, and quarters withouten cunzie, an I'm no mista'en.—Na, na," continued he, as she pressed the purse upon him, "an ye wull hae it sae, keep it for Kate yonder; she may want it, puir thing. May the blessed Virgin be thy protection, my bonnie bit lassie," said he to Katherine, as he turned about to her and pressed her to his breast. —"Hoot toot, this'll no do—ye maunna greet, bairn," added he, as the tears were breaking over his own eye-lids. "Fear ye na I'll be back wi' thee ere lang an I be spared. But by St Lowry, that's true, my leddy, ye maun promise me that if onything sould happen to hinder me frae coming back, ye'll see that somebody convoys her as safe to Tarnawa as I hae brought thee to Norham."

Katherine sobbed bitterly at the idea which her father had awakened. The lady readily promised him what he wished. Rory again pressed his daughter to his bosom, and, striking the side of his garron two or three successive blows with the shaft of his gaudclip, he darted off, and was out of sight in a moment.

The lady, accompanied by Katherine Spears and the minstrel, slowly sought the bank of the Tweed. A signal was made for the ferry-boat, and they were wafted into England. At the gates of Norham Castle the lady was speedily known, and its friendly walls received her and her two companions.

END OF VOLUME SECOND.

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